The Magazine for Advanced Comic Book Collectors!

COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

No. 44
February 1997

THE AMAZING WORLD OF Wally Wood!

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ON THE COVER:
A closeup of Wally Wood's classic cover to Weird Science #16 (Nov/Dec 1952).

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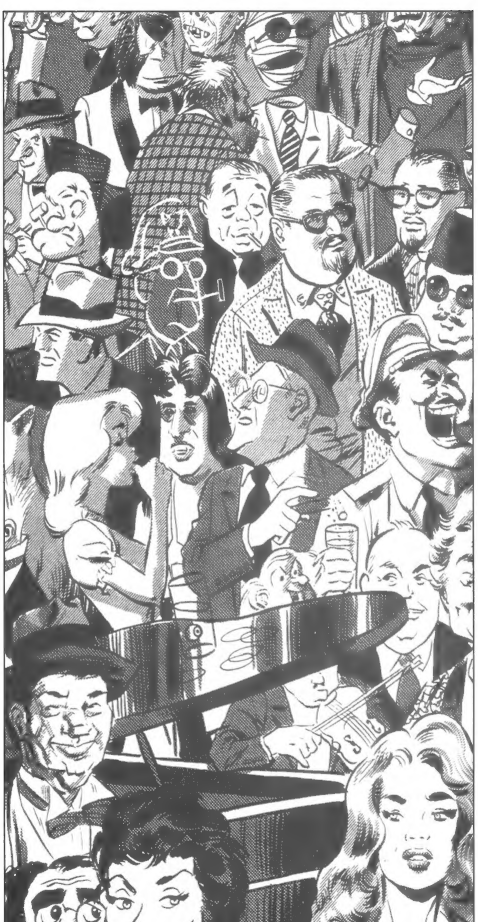
Issue Number #44, February 1997



PANE-PICTO-WHATIST?

The other day a reporter friend of mine asked me if comic book collectors were technically bibliophiles. I replied "yes… and no." Since comic books are technically a sub-category of books, I suppose it isn't totally incorrect to refer to collectors as bibliophiles, but I usually like the more specific term "Panepictophile" (one who loves comic books). I sometimes see the incorrect term "panelphile" used, which is obviously based on the word "panelologist".

As most know, a "panelologist" (a three decade-old term proposed in early fanzines) is often incorrectly used to describe comic book collectors. The word "panelologist" is really defined as "one who studies and researches comics or art in panels."

A comic book collector is better described as a "panepictographist" (one who collects comic books). Like the descriptors "numismatist" (one who collects coins), "philatelist" (one who collects stamps), and "syngraphist" (one who collects paper money), the term "panepictographist" does an excellent job describing one who collects "art and writing in panels".

Our discussion led us to other interesting terms that relate to our hobby. It seems to me that the term "panepictophile" (one who loves comic books) really describes the lowest level of involvement on the medium of comic books. The next level would be "panepictographist". (one who collects comic books) followed by "panepictomaniac" (one who is crazy about comic books). I plead guilty to all three of these levels of involvement, especially "panepictomania"! At different times, with different books, and under special circumstances (usually conventions) I am often described by my non-collector friends as "totally crazy about comic books".

But there's a fourth level of collector interest that is even more intense… that being "panepictoholism." One who "is consumed by comic books to the point of self-destruction."

How many times have we read or heard quotes from panepictoholics like "my comic books take up more rooms in our house than our kids" or "my wife hates my comics" or even worse "comics caused my divorce!" I even know collectors (not a lot, but a few) that buy comics first and worry about the monthly bills later. I sometimes feel obliged to remind them of what is meant by "disposable income."

Maybe after all is said and done, the best way to integrate one's collecting passions and keep a balanced perspective is to remember just one more basic definition… "hobby" (an activity or interest pursued for pleasure or relaxation and not as a main occupation)…

Best,

Gary

Gary M. Carter
Panelologist, Panepictophile, Panepictographist,
Panepictomaniac… and editor

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Joe Kubert Writes

Dear Guys, Your December '96 issue (#42 CBM) was a terrific Christmas present for me. I want to thank Steve Ringgenberg, Shawn Hamilton and Matthew Gore for their kind words. Except for a (very) few "typo-glitches", really appreciated all of your kind expressions. Thanks.

Joe Kubert, New Jersey

Not to get so sweaty

Loved the World's Finest cover homage for issue #43! (I'm assuming that Lisa did the layout–well done!) Looking at the "Big 3," I reflected upon how really cool World's Finest Comics were in the early and mid-1940's. There again was the awe and mystery of the Golden Age books I could never see or read–at least back when I was a kid (1960s). The ability to hold and peruse those classic cardboard covered tomes nowadays still gives me that "itchy–I want" spine chill only we collectors can relate to. It's our curse, as well as our gift. Ah, so–

I hope as we collectors gain, exchange, and otherwise vary our stable of books, we remember not to get so sweaty about everything and take comic stuff so seriously. I realize serious money at times is involved, and serious money means serious business. I also hope, though, that the comic "business" doesn't kill the joy of "comics." I'm no Pollyanna, heaven knows, but all the horrendous press the current market is taking today makes one pause, ie: Ron Perelman; "friend" of comics, Marvel's abdication and selling the rights to their "offspring," diminishing reader interest, and the upsurge of a lot of less-than-great new product–it's enough to shake your confidence in the medium.

It makes me drift back into the Silver and Gold–to revisit my comic friends when they knew who and what they were. A time when I knew who they were, and could count on them to be there each month. Hal Jordan, Barry Allen, Carter Hall, Tony Stark, Ben Grimm–the people, not just the costumes. Maybe that's the problem...all we have today are costumes. It's a roller coaster, isn't it?

Whoa–! Way too deep, Gentner!

I'm reading and loving "Haunted Tank" stories like mad and can't wait to finish my upcoming article to you. It's been too long! All the best this holiday buddy.

Steve Gentner, Oregon

A Warm Spot

I wanted to write you and tell you I think you magazine is wonderful. The articles, great cover reproductions, and general feel of your magazine makes it a first on my reading list each month. I enjoy your mature approach to the hobby we love, unlike some of the others out there who seem to be driving the "hype", your publication really hits a warm spot with those of us who have found comics, and comic collecting the enjoyable pastime it was always meant to be.

Keep up the good work, you have a lot of fans here in Houston. I wish you much continued success. (P.S. Richard Evans at Bedrock says Hi!)

D.J. Jennings, Texas

Not so, Keith

Just finished Keith Contarino's latest article in CBM #42, and I also share his frustration with the illogical side of our beloved comic book hobby. I would be thrilled to add an Atomic Rabbit #1 to my collection, or Funnies #64, Ace #11, Lone Ranger Comics #1, etc... any 1st edition or 1st appearance of any character is a welcome addition.

Until collectors worldwide invest in Ernest Gerber's Photo Journal Guide To Comic Books and, in conjunction with the Overstreet Guide, educate themselves on all the fantastic Golden Age and Silver Age comic books available, desirability will probably center around the superhero genre. Yawn... Mr. Contarino also stated that Spider-Man #1 is not a 1st appearance, or an origin, and doesn't have any new super villain. Not so, Keith. Let's take another look at Amazing Spider-Man #1:

*The origin of Spider-Man is retold, as reflected by Peter Parker.
*1st appearance of the Chameleon, a new super villain.
*1st appearance of J. Johah Jameson.
*1st appearance of John Jameson.
*1st appearance of Spider-Man in his own title.
*1st Fantastic Four X-Over (ties with F.F. #12 as 1st Marvel X-Over).

It gives me great pleasure to gaze lovingly at Vol. 1, No. 1, nestled comfortably within the indicia at the bottom of the inside cover of my copy of Spidey #1. So important, so historic, this issue. But is a NM copy worth $18,000 or more? You bet! Spider-Man is, arguably, the best superhero ever created and should remain so forevermore.

Welcome back to Comic Book Marketplace, Keith. We missed ya!

On another tropic… who is the artist who produced the cover painting for Green Hornet Comics #1 (December, 1940, Helnit Publ. Co.)? Presented in classic "pulp-style", the cover shows a close-up of Kato driving the "Black Beauty" to its destination as the Green Hornet fires his gas-gun out of the car's window. The painting, possibly done in tempera, perfectly captures the essence of its heroic subjects by focusing on the Hornet's green eyes and face mask as the centerpiece.

I think it would be a terrible tragedy to the comic book hobby if the as-yet-unknown artist never received due credit for his masterpiece. The only clue that we have is a smudgy signature at the bottom of the cover which reads "Ressnick", "Russell", or some-such. Photos of the cover to Green Hornet Comics #1 can be found on page 337 of Gerber's Photo journal Guide To Comic Books, Volume One, and in the current 26th edition of the Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide on page 234.

I hope some knowledgeable CBM reader out there in fandom can help solve the mystery and track down the cover artist of Green Hornet Comics #1 from 1940. Sincerely,

John Mlachnik, Minnesota

Instead, I agree

As a long-time believer in Dr. Contarino's ability to assess trends (he correctly said Sandman came into comic books first in World's Fair 1939), I enjoyed his writings on key books… they often address my concerns. As an owner of a high grade Spider-Man #1, you would think I would disagree with his take on the value of Spider-Man's first issue. Instead, I agree… Spiderman #1 is nowhere near the cultural find that Amazing Fantasy #15 is!

I've also got More Fun #52-53, so I probably grimaced some at his comparisons of More Fun #52 to More Fun #55. (I used to own More Fun #55 and dealt it away some time ago.) I simply feel #52-53 offer a thorough and a great origin for the spectre.

More Fun #55 is probably better drawn but DC's Dr. Fate struggles to endure. The Spectre was a major player in Kingdom Come and helped save us all in Marvel vs. DC!!! (I also shake my head at Adventure #40 selling for 10's of thousands! World's Fair 1939 was Sandman's 1st appearance.)

Anyway, the part of Keith's column I positively didn't agree with were his comments about The Legion of Superheros! They are lousy now, but their battles in the past were excellent! I loved the technological wonders predicted there! LSH are my all time favorites!

Issue #43 was fantastic! An incredible report on Archie from Rick Sloane! (Brings back our youth, right Mr. Carter?) Lou Mougin brought up one of fandom's most difficult questions–"When did the Silver Age begin?" As a longtime collector, I will give one possible solution here! DC's Silver Age began in Detective #225 as Martian Manhunter has always endured. DC's first significant and truly memorable Silver Age event is Showcase #4. This led to revivals of Golden Age characters.

Marvel's Silver Age revival probably occurred in Young Men #24. Captain America, Bucky, Human Torch, Toro and Sub-Mariner all returned–and Human Torch flashes back to Torch killing Hitler in the issue! The first successful Marvel revival was Fantastic Four #1. When Amazing Fantasy #15 led to Spider-Man's own book, history was secured!

Richard M. Brown, Michigan

(continued on page 72)

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Strange Stories From Another World!

By Pat S. Calhoun

Fawcett's fantasy-horror comics made an enjoyable contribution to the pre-Code era. They always attempted to work with imaginative concepts in colorful ways; the accent was on entertainment. The five-issue run of *Strange Stories From Another World* is a particularly good example of their efforts. Not only does the short run make putting a set together an intriguing task, but the painted covers by the incredible Norman "Mars Attacks" Saunders add consistency and considerable panache to the look of the books.

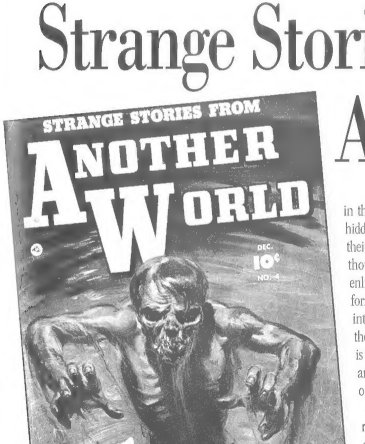
Another distinguishing characteristic of the Fawcett fantasy comics was that they regularly ran three stories per issue as opposed to the four or five shorter stories that most of the other companies used.

Less stories meant more convoluted and detailed narratives–as the first issue demonstrates with three outstanding tales. Issue #1 was titled *Unknown World* (June 1952), but the numbering, the date, and the Saunders covers, clearly establish the continuity. The format is unusually well-balanced; three ten-page stories backed by a two-page text yarn. "The Sea of the Dead" tells of a ship's captain who fled vessel, crew, and passengers before a deadly disaster. When he leaves port on a new ship he can't find anyone else on board, and he sees barnacles covering surfaces well above the waterline and other hints that this is really the same ship he abandoned to its doom. His fear of the strangely deserted ship grows, and suspense builds until the spirits haunting him reveal their presence in a ballroom full of ghastly corpses in a festive mood. Let's just say that their revenge is sweet. The art by Sheldon Moldoff captures the creepy atmosphere.

"The Serpent Queen" is a superlative supernatural story set in the South American jungle. The basic plot elements of a hidden valley and a tribe of primitives ruled by the queen of their serpent cult–a beautiful woman who claims to be two thousand years old–are familiar enough, but they're enlivened by original touches such as the magic rite performed on prisoners that leaves their heads intact mounted upon skeleton bodies. Plus the story ends on a nicely indirect note that is handled in a visual manner. The lurid art is by Bob McCarty, in an exaggerated style that's thoroughly expressive.

The provocatively-titled "Footsteps on the Ceiling" rounds out the main attractions. It's a bizarre tale of an ex-con who hates dogs because once while escaping from prison a pursuing bloodhound bit his leg and ended his career as an acrobat. Of course his partner runs a kennel, which the other man burns down in a vengeful rage. One dog lives, though badly burned, and the kennel owner tries to revive him with a special salve that he's concocted. The dog dies–yet its body continues to function like a zombie–powered by some chemical combination from the medicine.

This gets even the dog-hater's attention as he visualizes a "performing dead dog" theater act! He starts to train the dog but is accosted by spirits of the dead come to claim the dog as one of their own. Still, he manages to assemble the act and get a booking, but when a horde of hideous ghosts joins the crowd



There is something genuinely grisly about Saunders' creature on the cover of Strange Stories From Another World #4 (Dec 1952)... an appropriate illustration for a yarn called "Monsters of the Mind".

After Norman Saunders' eye-catching skeleton cover on Unknown World #1 (Jun 1952) caused a potential customer to pick up the book, the back cover then urged them to "enter corridors of horror never before conceived..."

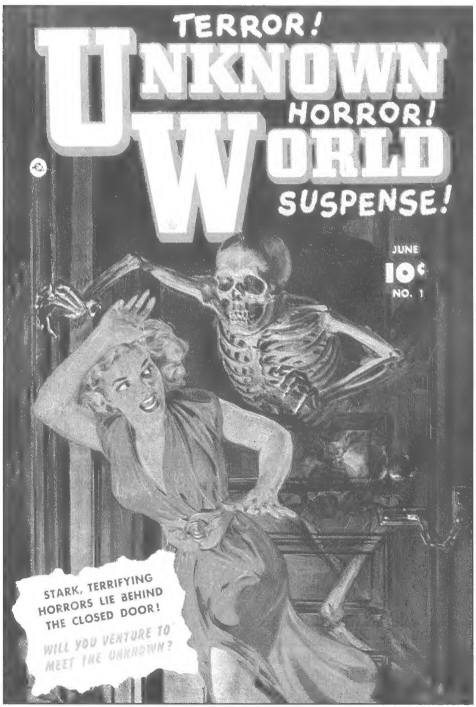
Saunders ends this short-lived title's run with the cover of Strange Stories From Another World #5 (Feb 1953). It perfectly captures the sensual fury of an evil spell as the weird ones whirl around the hapless victim who has evoked them.

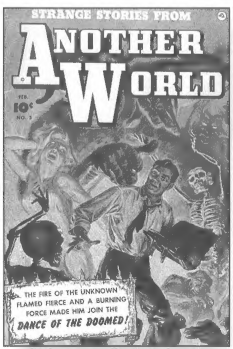
on opening night- pandemonium erupts. And the inevitable retribution that overcomes the animal-killer is subdued but slick, with an eerie aftermath that makes a pleasing punch line.

Issue #2 is highlighted by a tale of a witch who practices black magic of the blackest kind, with Shelly Moldoff going to town depicting how foolish the wish for eternal life can be. After being hung by the neck till his head has twisted around and horribly burned in a fire, the poor townsman who bargained with the witch for "everlasting youth" begs her to let him die- but to no avail. Issue #3's most memorable entry is "The Unseen", a tale of a mysterious pair of eyeglasses that reveal a world of spooky spirits to the wearer. McCarty does a good job portraying the poltergeist as weird and unsettling creatures that could drive one mad.

The Saunders cover on *Strange Stories From Another World* #4 (December 1952) has a raw power, the brutal being is painted with a vagueness that makes it look like it's still in the process of materializing from–*Another World*. Inside, although none of the stories are brilliant, they are all pretty good reads. Moldoff renders "Pillar of Stone", a weirdie about good and evil spirits battling deep in the jungle. Of course the monk who guards the pillar in which the good spirit is imprisoned is also the murdering maniac who haunts the region. It's standard fare, but Shelly's graphic mastery keeps it interesting.

"Monsters of the Mind", the cover story, again features McCarty's art in a tale of alien spy and counterspy as a man with a briefcase full of global defense secrets is pursued by an evil race from some other planet or plane. There's a zinger at the end that turns things around pretty smoothly. The third story, "Phantom Riders in the Sky", gets some more mileage out of the song that inspired ME's Ghost Rider, Vaughn Monroe's classic "Ghost Riders in the Sky". A criminal on the lam ends up in Broken Fork, a sleepy little town that the locals believe is guarded by the ghosts of two famous lawmen from their Wild West history. The Phantom Riders patrol the skies at night over Broken Fork, or so the legend goes. And the crook hiding out there comes to find just how true the legend is, as spec-

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tral sheriff and dead deputy track him down.

Another World #5 (February 1953) is the final issue, and the Saunders cover for "Dance of the Doomed" is the most delirious of the run. There are four stories inside; this is the only ish structured that way. The opener is the cover feature, another take on those unknown entities that dwell amongst us unperceived, the invisible inhabitants of another dimension that can only be seen by one versed in the black arts. The seeker of forbidden knowledge in this yarn, as in many such, comes to wish he had never gotten his first glimpse of these demons. No surprises here, but it's done to a turn, and the McCarty illustrations are as frenetic as ever. The vampire tale that follows has the Moldoff look, and the artist on the third story–whoever it is–also had work in other issues; the use of the same group of artists was an additional ingredient that gave the run a special flavor.

The last two stories–by coincidence or design–make excellent use of the elemental opposites, fire and water. "The Rain, the Deadly Rain" offers more jungle mumbo-jumbo as a treasure hunter along the Amazon River steals the diamond eyes from a rain god's statue. The thief is thereafter plagued by storms and floods as the forces of nature work against him. It's predictable but with enough minor embellishments to make it worthwhile. "The Flaming Witness" deals with partners at a steel smelting plant. One pushes the other into a vat of molten metal and is then hounded by a fiery spirit. But the strong-willed murderer perseveres, reaping the financial gains of sole ownership of the steel business.

Time goes by, with his associates all believing the death was accidental, and they reward his leadership by making him a private railroad car. But on his first trip in the car his pride of achievement is shattered when things start to heat up–literally–as his partner's ghost reveals to him that the metal plates of the railroad car were made from the load of steel that his body had melted into... It's a satisfying finale to the issue and the title

Fawcett stopped publishing *Strange Stories From Another World* because they were in the process of withdrawal from the comic book business after the long and costly courtroom battle between their Captain Marvel and DC's Superman. This interesting and somewhat offbeat horror title is yet another casualty of that famous legal battle. ■

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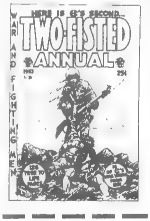

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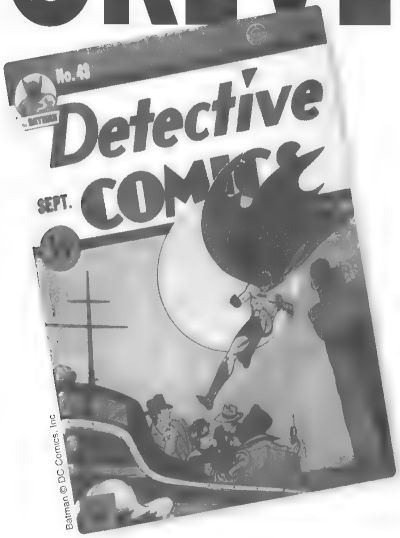

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When Fawcett took a fancy to flicks!

By Michelle Nolan

Collectors and students of pop culture may not realize how closely movies and comic books grew up with each other, nor how they once came together to produce some collectible mid-century artifacts of film fiction.

When *Famous Funnies* became the first regularly published newsstand comic book in 1934, the first "talkie" had been introduced only seven years earlier. In more than a few families of the 1930's and into the early 1940's, not only had big brother or big sister grown up without comic books, but without films as we know them today.

With comics being the most cinematic of the print media, it was inevitable that comics would take advantage of the movies for subject material. Surprisingly, however, it took a long time for the idea to catch on. In fact, the idea did not catch on the first couple of times the title *Movie Comics* was tried. At both DC (then known as National) in 1939 and at Fiction House in 1946-47, unrelated titles by the same generic name became the first comic book failures at those two prolific Golden Age publishing houses. DC's version lasted only six issues (all either scarce or rare and highly collectible now) and the Fiction House's fling with film failed after only four issues (not quite as scarce but also quite collectible, with pretty Matt Baker art the feature attraction).

Finally, when Fawcett tried the idea beginning in late 1949, it worked—and it worked well enough to leave us with 35 collectible issues filled with film-as-comic book novel along with color covers (often on both sides) and black-and-white stills on the inside covers.

But the combination of an historic level of comic book competition and Fawcett's own desire to concentrate on its then burgeoning line of paperback books (the Gold Medal series), ended not only their two movie titles, but finished off within a year, all of the company's wonderful comic book line.

Not many folks realize that in 1952, Fawcett was a comic book king during the year in which more newsstand comic books were produced than in any year until the 1990's—a whopping 3,162, according to Southern California index expert Dan Stevenson, give or take a couple of issues that may or may not exist.

And part of Fawcett's company-record production of 307 issues in 1952 (it tied with Dell for second place behind Marvel's 407 issues and, believe it or not, published 12 more issues than DC) included a dozen issues of Fawcett's bi-monthly *Motion Picture Comics* and *Fawcett Movie Comics*. (By the way, one of the mysteries of the ages for those of us who love to nitpick the

CBM CHECKLIST

FAWCETT MOVIE COMIC

All issues have color front and back covers with stills of the actors or scenes from the films, and all issues have stills from the films on the inside front and back covers. There is no advertising except for two issues with Lash LaRue commercial products. For some reason Fawcett called one series "Com c" and the other series "Comics."

Dakota Lil (no #, 1949) – 30-page story, plus 2 pages of music to the song "Rose of Cimarron." 20th Century Fox western starring George Montgomery, Marie Windsor, Rod Cameron. Back cover is solo color still of Montgomery.

Copper Canyon (no #, 1950) 32-page story. Paramount western starring Ray Milland, Hedy Lamarr, Macdonald Carey, Mona Freeman, Harry Carey, Jr. Back cover is two black and white stills.

Destination Moon (no #, 1950) 39-page story. Eagle Lion (George Pal) science fiction film starring Warner Anderson, John Archer, Tom Powers, Dick Wesson, Erin O'Brien Moore. Back cover is a tinted close-up of the moon.

Montana (no #, 1950) – 32-page story. Warner Bros. western starring Errol Flynn, Alexis Smith, S. Z. Zakall and Douglas Kennedy. Back cover is two black and white stills.

Pioneer Marshall (no #, 1950) 32-page story. Republic western starring Monte Hale, Paul Hurst, Nan Leslie, Roy Barcroft. Back cover is solo color still of Monte Hale.

Powder River Rustlers (no #, 1950) 32-page story. Republic western starring Rocky Lane, Eddy Waller, Gerry Ganzer, Roy Barcroft. Back cover is solo color still of Rocky Lane.

Singing Guns (no #, 1950) 32-page story. Republic western starring Vaughn Monroe, Ella Raines, Walter Brennan, Ward Bond, Jeff Corey, Barry Kelly. Back cover is color still of Vaughn Monroe and Ella Raines.

Gunmen of Abilene (#7, 1950; it should have been #8, but for some reason was numbered 7) – 32-page story drawn by Bob Powell. Republic western starring Rocky Lane, Eddy Waller, Roy

oddities of old comics is why one company would use the singular "comic" and the plural "comics" for the same thing!)

By 1953, Fawcett was down drastically to 141 issues, a telling prelude to the final few comics from that firm, which were dated January 1954. Among those 141 was the final Fawcett movie comic "Cripple Creek" in *Motion Picture Comics* #114 (actually the 14th issue), dated January 1953. With that, it was left to Dell to carry the flag for the flicks, beginning in earnest in the mid-1950s and continuing for many, many successful issues.

But while most Silver and Golden Age collectors are familiar with those wonderful movie issues from Dell and Gold Key, comparatively few know how Fawcett paved the path.

The big difference was that unlike Dell later in the 1950s and DC with its abortive effort in 1939 (and again for four issues of *Feature Films* in 1950), Fawcett did not try to get readers to see the "big picture"—in this case, quite literally. Most of the 35 Fawcett issues celebrate movies that are today almost totally forgotten and seldom seen, which adds to their attractiveness and mystique as collectibles of a bygone era.

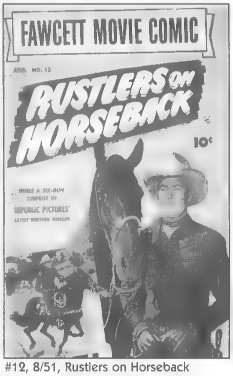
How many of you even know who George Montgomery was? He was a dashingly handsome, fairly well known action and western film actor in the 1940s and '50s and was married to the much better-known Dinah Shore from 1943-'60. He starred in both the first Fawcett film comic, the unnumbered *Dakota Lil*, in 1949 and in the last, *Cripple Creek*, plus a third movie issue, *The Texas Rangers*.

Or how many have ever heard of George Murphy? He was best known as a dancer who never quite became a first-rate star during the Hollywood studio era. He gave up his movie career after playing the lead role in the 1952 *Walk East on Beacon*, a little-remembered spy story nicely illustrated by Kurt Schaffenberger in *Motion Picture Comics* #113.

(As an aside, I remember Murphy for other reasons. Murphy had gone into politics in the 1960s as a Republican congressman, as I recall, and he was stumping with President Richard Nixon during what became the infamous October 1970 riot in San Jose. As a young reporter, I got a tip from my underground sources that there could be violence if Nixon agitated the huge crowd of students from protest hotbed San Jose State—remember, this was only a few months after he ordered the invasion of Cambodia. So I dressed down as a flower child and got right in the middle of what became a wild and crazy crowd. I recall Nixon being "egged" and having rocks thrown at him after he gave the "V" sign. I nearly got my head clobbered by club-swinging police during an ensuing riot, but I got my first big story, and soon was placed on the timecard at the newspaper! But I digress....)

At any rate, Montgomery was just about the biggest name Fawcett feted more than once. The biggest names to be illustrated in the series, of course, were Errol Flynn (well past his prime in *Montana*), Ray Milland and Hedy Lamarr (in the underrated mood western *Copper Canyon*), Burt Lancaster (marvelous in the rousing foreign legion riff, *Ten Tall Men*), James Stewart (in one of his least-known films *Carbine Williams*), Rhonda Fleming and Ronald Reagan (gloriously decorative and properly heroic, respectively, in *The Last Outpost*) and Robert Taylor and a breathtakingly beautiful 20-year-old Elizabeth Taylor (in *Ivanhoe*).

Big names, however, were the exception in the Fawcett series, which was obviously designed to appeal to action fans. However, the series has



#12, 8/51, Rustlers on Horseback
A redundant title if there ever was one! Big Rocky Lane was always smiling (except at the Bad Guys!)

intense crossover interest for both western film buffs and comic book collectors, because no fewer than 15 of the comics celebrated classic Republic "B" westerns or Lash LaRue films (hey, they are classic, and I'll shoot it out with anyone who says otherwise!).

One of the most personable and photogenic of all western stars, Allan "Rocky" Lane, was fea-

tured in a whopping eight issues! A personal favorite, big Rocky Lane was the kind of guy you always figured you could count on to be a friend, kind of like a big brother on a horse. There was never a better, good-natured lawman in all of films. He was also one of the last of the "B" western series stars before the one-hour horse-opera genre virtually disappeared overnight in the 1952-'53 period, swallowed up by television. (Plenty of westerns were produced in the two decades after 1953, but most were bigger-budget productions, usually lasting much longer and starring actors who played a variety of roles). In those "B" westerns, Rocky Lane played Rocky Lane, as it were, just as Lash LaRue played Lash LaRue and Monte Hale played Monte Hale.

Those three characters were among Fawcett's biggest sellers, along with *Hopalong Cassidy* (who never appeared in the Fawcett movie series because actor William Boyd was no longer making new *Hopalong Cassidy* films by then). So Fawcett obviously saw a way to get their regular comics even more exposure.

Fawcett titles are among the most popular with Western comic book collectors because of their dazzling color photo covers and occasionally-nice interior art. The Fawcett movie series titles (see listing) are among the best of those because they each carried several stills and generally had mighty pretty art and 32-page stories.

Incidentally, I nominate the *Rocky Lane* Republic film and Fawcett comic *Rustlers on Horseback* for the oddest title, if not also the "most redundant" (is there such a phrase in English?). What other kind of rustlers could there be? It would be a little tough on foot, and it was a long while until they had cars and planes. It's like saying "Gunfighters with Bullets." (!) Don't you just love comic books?

And Lash LaRue, the fondly remembered "King of the Bullwhip", was pretty much a dead ringer for Humphrey Bogart. (Check out the young Bogie in "The Oklahoma Kid" from Warner Bros. in 1939 and see if you agree!)

Today, most collectors consider the three science-fiction Fawcett movie titles to be the most collectible--*When Worlds Collide* by George Evans and Al Williamson, *The Man from Planet X* by Kurt Schaffenberger and *Destination Moon*... They are certainly the priciest titles, topped by the scarce *The Man from Planet X*, a comic that is seen about as seldom as the original film.

Destination Moon is, sadly, a period piece by now--somehow it was also adapted for a story in DC's *Strange Adventures* #1 in that same year of Barcroft, Donna Hamilton. Back cover is color still of Rocky Lane.

King of the Bullwhip (#8, Dec 1950) 32-page story drawn by Bob Powell. Western Adventure Production (distributed by Realart) starring Lash La Rue, Fuzzy St. John, Jack Holt, Ann Gwynn, Tom Neal. Back cover has small color still of Lash LaRue with advertisement for Lash LaRue whips and outfits!

The Old Frontier (#9, Feb 1951, misdated Feb. 1950) – 32-page story. Republic western starring Monte Hale, Paul Hurst, Claudia Barrett, William Henry. Back cover is color still of Monte Hale

The Missourians (#10, Apr 1951) 32-page story. Republic western starring Monte Hale, Paul Hurst, Roy Barcroft, Lyn Thomas. Back cover is color still of Monte Hale.

The Thundering Trail (#11, Jun 1951) 32-page story Western Adventure Production (distributed by Realart) starring Lash LaRue, Fuzzy St. John, Sally Anglum, Archie Twitchell, Sue Hussy. Back cover is advertisement for Lash LaRue merchandise.

Rustlers on Horseback (#12, Aug 1951) – 32-page story. Republic western starring Rocky Lane, Eddy Waller, Roy Barcroft, Claudia Barrett. Back cover is color still of Rocky Lane.

Warpath (#13, Oct 1951) – 32-page story. Paramount western starring Edmond O'Brien, Forrest Tucker, Dean Jagger, Harry Carey, Jr., Polly Bergen. Back cover is two color stills from the film.

The Last Outpost (#14, Dec 1951) – 32-page story. Paramount western starring Ronald Reagan, Rhonda Fleming, Bruce Bennett, Noah Beery, Jr., Bill Williams

The Man from Planet X (#15, Feb 1952) – 32-page story drawn by Kurt Schaffenberger. United Artists science-fiction film starring Robert Clarke, Margaret Field, William Schallert. Back cover is color still of the three leading actors.

Ten Tall Men (#16, Apr 1952) – 32-page story. Columbia adventure film of Foreign Legion starring Burt Lancaster, Jody Lawrence, Gilbert Roland, Kieron Moore, George Tobias. Back cover is color still of Burt Lancaster.

Rose of Cimarron (#17, Jun 1952) 31-page story with 1-page music to "Cimarron Territory." 20th Century Fox western starring Jack Buetel, Mala Powers, Bill Williams, Jim Davis, Bob Steele. Back cover is color still of Jack Buetel and Mala Powers.

The Brigand (#18, Aug 1952 32-page story drawn by Kurt Schaffenberger. Edward Small adventure film (based on Alexander Dumas novel) starring Anthony Dexter, Jody Lawrence, Gaie Robbins, Anthony Quinn. Back cover is still of Anthony Dexter.

Carbine Williams (#19, Oct 1952) 32-page story. MGM crime film starring James Stewart, Jean Hagen, Wendell Corey, Carl Benton Reid, Paul Stewart. Back cover is black and white still of James Stewart.

Ivanhoe (#20, Dec 1952) – 32-page story MGM classic film starring Robert Taylor, Elizabeth Taylor, Joan Fontaine, George Sanders, Emlyn Williams. Back cover is tinted still of Elizabeth Taylor.

MOTION PICTURE COMICS

The Vanishing Westerner (#101, 1950, first issue) – 32-page story. Republic western starring Monte Hale, Paul Hurst, Aline Towne, Roy Barcroft. Back cover is color still of Monte Hale.

Code of the Silver Sage (#102, Jan 1951) – 32-page story. Republic western starring Rocky Lane, Eddy Waller, Roy Barcroft, Kay Christopher. Back cover is color still of Rocky Lane.

Covered Wagon Raid (#103, Mar 1951) – 32-page story. Republic western starring Rocky Lane, Eddy Waller, Alex Gerry, Lyn Thomas, Bryon Barr. Back cover is two color stills.

Vigilante Hideout (#104, May 1951) 32-page story drawn by Bob Powell. Republic western starring Rocky Lane, Eddy Waller, Roy Barcroft, Virginia Herrick. Back cover is color still of Rocky Lane.

The Red Badge of Courage (#105, Jul 1951) – 32-page story drawn by Bob Powell. MGM film based on Stephen Crane's Civil War novel, starring Audie Murpy, Bill Mauldin, Douglas Dick, John Dierkes, Royal Dano, Arthur Hunnicutt, Gloria Eaton. Back cover is color still of Audie Murphy and Gloria Eaton.

The Texas Rangers (#106, Sep 1951) 32-page story. Columbia western starring

George Montgomery, Gale Storm, Jerome Courtland, Noah Beery, Jr., William Bishop. Back cover is two color stills from the film.

Frisco Tornado (#107, Nov 1951) – 32-page story. Republic western starring Rocky Lane, Eddy Waller, Stephen Chase, Martha Hyer. Back cover is color still of Rocky Lane.

Mask of the Avenger (#108, Jan 1952) – 32-page story. Columbia adventure film starring John Derek, Anthony Quinn, Jody Lawrence, Arnold Moss, Eugene Iglesias. Back cover is color still of John Derek.

Rough Riders of Durango (#109, Mar 1952) – 32-page story Republic western starring Rocky Lane, Walter Baldwin, Aline Towne, Steve Darrell. Back cover is color still of Rocky Lane.

When Worlds Collide (#110, May 1952) – 32-page story by George Evans with assist from Al Williamson. Paramount science-fiction film (George Pal) starring Richard Derr, Barbara Rush, Peter Hanson, John Hoyt, Larry Keating, Judith Ames. Back cover is color still of the three leading actors from the film.

The Vanishing Outpost (#111, Jul 1952) – 32-page story. Western Adventure Production (distributed by Realart) starring Lash LaRue, Fuzzy St. John, Sue Hussy. Back cover is color still of Lash LaRue.

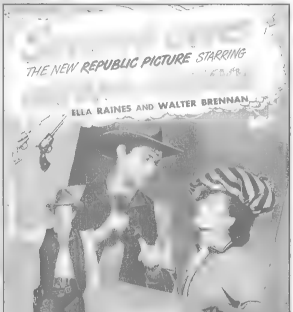
Brave Warrior (#112, Sep 1952, 32-page story). Columbia western starring Jon Hall, Christine Larson, Jay Silverheels, Michael Ansara. Back cover is tinted still of Jon Hall and Jay Silverheels.

Walk East on Beacon (#113, Nov 1952, 32-page story) drawn by Kurt Schaffenberger. Columbia spy thriller starring George Murphy, Finlay Currie, Virginia Gilmore. Back cover is a black-and-white advertisement for the film with seven small stills.

Cripple Creek (#114, Jan 1953, 32-page story). Columbia western starring George Montgomery, Karin Booth, Jerome Courtland, William Bishop. Back cover is tinted still of George Montgomery.

1950. Consider this sobering fact: More years have passed (nearly 25) since our last manned lunar landing (in 1972) than years had passed between the appearance of *Destination Moon* and the year of the first landing (1969). And who knows when we will have the finances (and the hardware) to again venture to another world, even one as close as the moon?

If that doesn't make you sad–at least from the standpoint of the spirit of adventure–I don't know what will. I still get all teary eyed when I think of standing on the Florida beach on the morning of



No number, Fawcett movie comic 1950, Singing Guns–Vaughn Monroe was much better known as a singer ("Ghost Riders In The Sky"), so the title is actually a pun!

July 16, 1969, cheering with more than a million others while watching Apollo XI take off for the first moon landing. I knew it was a special moment in the history of mankind, but I never suspected how very special. When I saw *Destination Moon* and first read the comic (in 1956, when it was first reprinted in Charlton's *Space Adventures* #20), I vowed to be there to see the first moon trip take off! But I never thought I'd see the day when a nearly 50-year-old science-fiction movie was closer in time to that than the present is!

The Man from Planet X is a curious artifact, the result of a period when science fact and science fiction sometimes did not mesh at all. Schaffenberger's art is certainly first-rate–it rivals his beautiful stuff of the same era on *Captain Marvel Junior* and other Fawcett Marvel Family titles–but the story reads like something from 20 or 30 years earlier. But then, if you've ever seen the film, you'd know why. It's an atmospheric but dated mood piece, directed by famed cult figure Edgar G. Ulmer, and it virtually creaks… looking much older than a 1951 film.

In the two-volume McFarland Books title *Keep Watching the Skies*, written in 1982 by Bill Warren and still by far the best of all books on 1950's science fiction films, Warren writes that *The Man from Planet X* was the "first science fiction gothic horror film." Indeed it was, with its dark, brooding story of a lone alien's visit to a tiny island off the coast of Scotland and how one man foils the strange little alien's plans to resettle the people of the wandering Planet X on Earth. Warren has a marvelous description of the alien's space ship, evocatively drawn by Schaffenberger: "a high-tech Christmas tree ornament."

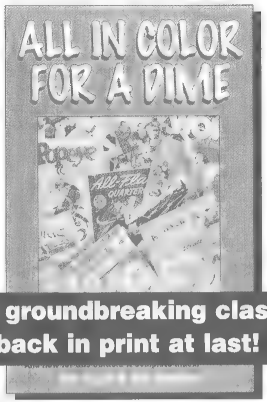
The Man from Planet X was among the first of the huge wave of aliens-on-earth films, a wave that actually began with the 1945 Republic serial *The Purple Monster Strikes*.

"When Worlds Collide" in a fairly compelling filming of the classic 1930's novel by Philip Wylie and Edwin Balmer (a two-parter that also included the never-filmed *After Worlds Collide*.) It was a George Pal special-effects fest, as was *Destination Moon*, but both are mere afterthoughts in the history of film compared to the memorable *War of the Worlds*, which appeared in early comics only in *Classics Illustrated*.

Fawcett, by the way, may not have been the first to hit the stands with a 32-page movie adaptation comic book (the earlier DC and Fiction House attempts did not feature stories that long). That honor may go to the 1949 Magazine Enterprises title *Movie Thrillers* #1, featuring a 32-page story by Ogden Whitney illustrating *Rope of Sand*, an entertaining Burt Lancaster adventure thriller. No month was given and this title was not part of ME's A-I numbering system for most of its comics, so collectors are uncertain as to whether *Rope of Sand* or the undated *Dakota Lil* hit the stands first.

Movie Love from Eastern Publishing (*Famous Funnies*) enjoyed a 22-issue run from 1950-53, illustrating at first two and later one movie per issue–generally big-budget "A" films–but this title was marketed primarily as a romance comic companion to the same firm's *Personal Love*. As they say in the movies, though, that's another story! ■

Pass this up now and you might just wait another 26 years...



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Amazing Fantasy No.16

THE UNTOLD SECRET ORIGIN OF SPIDER-MAN

By Will Murray

There is no more important single character created during the Silver Age of comics than Stan Lee & Steve Ditko's Spider-Man. He was to the Silver Age what Superman was to the Golden Age. Yet no superhero in history has had a murkier origin.

It used to be a simple story. According to Stan Lee, he conceived Spider-Man and turned it over to his top penciler, Jack Kirby, to bring to life. Kirby came back with seven pages. But Lee didn't like the muscular boy-turned-superhero of Kirby's interpretation. He wanted, in his own words, "a schnook." So he took Kirby off the book and brought in Steve Ditko. Ditko's approach was exactly what Lee wanted. Then came the next problem, publisher, Martin Goodman. Apparently afflicted with arachnaphobia, Goodman thought readers would be put off by the bizarre sight of a guy dressed as a human spider. He didn't want to publish Spider-Man.

Lee, however, did. He reminded Goodman that during Goodman's pre-Timely days as a pulp magazine publisher, one of his chief competitors published a very successful magazine called *The Spider*. It was a sound argument. So they compromised. Lee dumped the feature in *Amazing Fantasy* #15, which was about to be canceled and moved on to create more promising superheros like Ant-Man and Iron Man.

Except... *AF* #15 outsold everything else Marvel did that year. And since sales are the best indicator of reader interest, Goodman decided that Spider-Man deserved not just a second chance, but a mag of his own.

The rest is history.

Or it was until Jack Kirby claimed in an interview in Will Eisner's *Spirit Magazine* that he created Spider-Man with Joe Simon, the original Marvel Comics editor and long-time Kirby partner. Years later, Joe Simon penned a book called *The Comic Book Makers* and told his side of the story.

Kirby-Simon Wrinkles

In brief, Simon said the concept went back to 1953 and a character Jack Oleck and C.C. Beck created (under Simon's guidance) for Harvey Comics, called the Silver Spider and later Spiderman. Harvey passed on it and five years later, Simon and Kirby revamped it for Archie Comics as The Fly.

Then in 1962, Stan Lee asked Jack Kirby if he had any unused characters in his trunk. Kirby offered the original Harvey version of The Fly... Spiderman! Unaware of the character's complicated history, Lee took it. And when the project fell to Ditko, he recognized its similarity to The Fly, still being published at that time. Out went the Captain Marvel-like origin, to be replaced by the now-classic radioactive spider saga.

The Kirby-Simon wrinkles don't take anything away from Lee and Ditko's singular achievement on Spider-Man. And on the surface, they don't deny Stan's basic recollection, either.

Nagging Questions

But Stan's memory is (as he readily admits) sometimes hit-or-miss... and his recollection fails to take into account certain nagging questions. Such as:

If the first Spider-Man story was simply dumped into a dying mag to get rid of it, why go to the trouble of retitling *Amazing Adult Fantasy* to *Amazing Fantasy*? Why was Ditko's original *Amazing Fantasy* #15 cover scrapped in favor of a Kirby version if Spider-Man was simply a throwaway feature? And why did Stan promise more Spider-Man stories in following issues?

Then there is the intriguing mystery of where Spider-Man was originally intended to be published, if he was simply dumped into a doomed *Amazing Fantasy*.

I may not be able to answer all these questions definitely, but I believe I can dispel much of the murkiness surrounding these issues, including revealing for the first time, where the lead story in *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 was originally planned to be published, and it wasn't *Amazing Spider-Man* #1!

Convoluted History

First, let's set the stage with *Amazing Fantasy*'s convoluted history. It began in June, 1961, as *Amazing Adventures* and was nothing more or less than yet another of Lee's interchangeable fantasy comics. Their

The unused Ditko cover originally planned for Amazing Fantasy #15 has been altered to approximate what it may have looked like had it been used as the cover of Amazing Fantasy #16.

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TWO MORE OFF BEAT LEE-DITKO GEMS!

formula contents featured a Kirby lead story, backed up by Don Heck, Paul Reinman, and Steve Ditko's five pagers. It was radically transformed into *Amazing Adult Fantasy* with issue #7 (cover-dated November 1961) the same month Lee and Kirby launched *The Fantastic Four*. It's pretty clear that the added FF chores forced Lee to take Kirby off *Amazing Adventures*. And since the Lee-Ditko five pagers were extremely popular, as well as the only Marvel fantasy material Stan made a point of writing, Lee had good reason to think an entire book full of them would sell.

Amazing Adventures was the last Marvel title to feature Stan Lee's formula surprise endings combined with Kirby monsters.

It did. Well enough that the book remained monthly, and soon got its own letters page--rare in those days.

Fantastic Four sold well too. By mid 1962, it was also a monthly with its own letter page. Clearly the time was ripe for more superheros. *The Incredible Hulk* was launched with the May 1962 issue as a kind of compromise between superheros and the monster books that still sold decently, but were starting to fade in popularity.

New characters followed in a monthly procession. Spider-Man debuted in the August 1962 *Amazing Fantasy*, the same month that Thor took over *Journey Into Mystery*. Ant-Man popped up in the September *Tales To Astonish*. And the Human Torch was spun off into *Strange Tales* with the October issue. Kirby drew the origin stories of all three characters.

On that schedule, the last remaining unoccupied fantasy title, *Tales Of Suspense*, should have showcased a new character in the November 1962 issue. But Iron Man didn't show up until March of 1963! Instead, a typical Kirby lead fantasy yarn, backed by the usual stuff, filled the November issue. As it turned out, this was the last classic pre-hero issue. The next three issues showcased lead features by people who had never taken the lead slot before--Don Heck, Steve Ditko... and most unlikely of all, Jack Davis.

Why was there such a delay in introducing a new feature in *Tales Of Suspense*. It wasn't because Kirby was too busy. Kirby was always too busy. That didn't stop him from launching a revitalized *Two-Gun Kid* in November 1962.

Murky Circumstances

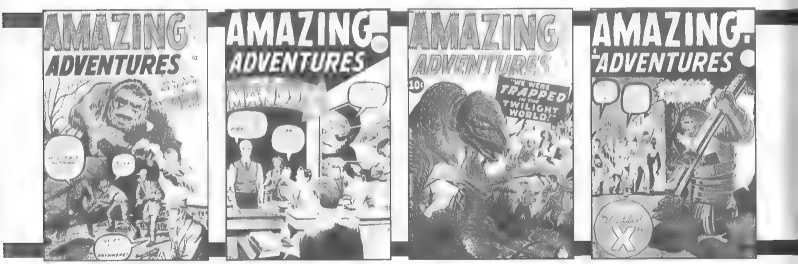
Perhaps the answer lies in the murky circumstances surrounding Spider-Man's origin.

In those days, Stan Lee ran a one-man editorial office. He had a very limited number of titles (thanks to a distribution agreement with rival National Comics) that forced him to drop a title before he could add a new one. For example, it's believed that *Amazing Fantasy* was replaced by *Linda Carter, Student Nurse* on Marvel's schedule.

So when Lee began creating new superheros, the best place to put them was in the front of his remaining fantasy books. He wasn't about to cancel the surprise hit *Rawhide Kid* or even the long-running *Millie The Model* to test-market an untried experimental character in his own title.

Thus Thor, the first of the new true post-FF superheros ended up in *Journey Into Mystery*, where Kirby was doing the lead story already. By that logic, it stands to reason that if the original plan was for Kirby to draw Spider-Man, he was destined to land in one of the Kirby-dominated books. It couldn't have been *Journey Into Mystery*. Thor debuted the same month as *Amazing Fantasy* #15. He must therefore have been intended for either *Tales To Astonish*, *Strange Tales* or *Tales Of Suspense*.

We can discount *Astonish* pretty safely, because according to Steve Ditko's recollection in "An Insider's Part of Comics History: Jack Kirby's Spider-Man" (Robin Snyder's *History of Comics* #5, May 1990) is that when he was first approached on the Spider-Man strip to ink what was then a Kirby-drawn character, Ant-Man was already in the works. Besides, Ant-Man was a revival of a pre-hero version of a character who had originally run in *Tales To Astonish*. Since the Torch strip in *Strange Tales* appeared only a month after Ant-Man, the timing would seem to be too tight for Spider-Man to have gone into *Strange Tales*.



The TOS Scenario

This leaves only *Tales Of Suspense*. The problems with the Spider-Man strip would certainly explain why *Tales Of*

Suspense went so many months without developing a lead superhero feature. Clearly, it wasn't because Lee needed to keep one book open to absorb existing inventory from the other titles. He soon runs out of Kirby material and turns to the guys drawing the backup stories. Even when Iron Man is introduced, it falls to Lee and Don Heck to do the origin story. Kirby is busy with an increasing workload, including launching *Sgt. Fury & His Howling Commandos*.

For years there have been persistent rumors that the lead story in the August (note the month) 1962, *Tales Of Suspense* ("The Man in the Bee Hive", a re-work of "The Man in the Ant Hill", featuring a size-changing mutant bee-keeper named Lucius Farnsworth) was the pilot for a new Marvel feature called Bee-Man, and that rough sketches for a costumed superhero version floated around the Marvel offices for years. According to these same reports, the concept was ultimately scrapped because of its close similarity to Ant-Man.

If true, this might seem to kill the *Tales Of Suspense* theory. But it's hypothetically possible that once Spider-Man was yanked from *Tales Of Suspense* #32, "The Man in the Bee Hive" story was created as a stopgap measure designed to set the stage for the revamped *Suspense*, when Stan found time to launch it.

There's one other problem with the *Suspense* theory. In his *History of the Comics* article, Ditko recalls Lee telling him from the outset that Spider-Man was destined for *Amazing* it was The Hulk, Rawhide Kid or Millie the Model seemed unimportant to him. This opens up the interesting possibility that had Spider-Man debuted in *Tales Of Suspense*, it would have been Lieber, not Lee, scripting it over Lee plots and Kirby pencils!

The ultimate irony here was that it was Lee's preference (in those days) to script everything Ditko drew for him. Apparently, he had a greater affinity for Ditko's artistic vision than Kirby's. Thus, the main reason Stan Lee scripted Spider-Man may have been because the art chores defaulted to Ditko!

Amazing Fantasy #16?

Whatever the intended home of Spider-Man was, it did end up in *Amazing Fantasy*... but not as a failed feature... dumped to get rid of it. It was Lee's plan to run the strip in *Amazing Fantasy* until reader reaction told him whether the strip was viable or not.

In fact, Lee had gone ahead and commissioned a second Spider-Man story for *Amazing Fantasy* #16, September 1962–and here's the proof!

First, let's look at the circumstantial evidence.

When *Amazing Fantasy* #15 appeared on the stands in June 1962, it featured the following cover blurb:

"Also in this issue: An important message to YOU, from the editor–about the NEW Amazing!*"*

Inside, on the fan page, Lee went into a long explanation of

Amazing Adult Fantasy ("The magazine that respects your intelligence") is highly sought after by collectors because of its art and stories and its place in Marvel history.

Fantasy #15. This is when Ditko was slated to ink a fledgling Kirby feature.

Of course it's possible Ditko's 30-year-old recollection had failed him. But in the absence of a clarification, we must take Ditko's recollection at face value–he was there. But I think the *Tales Of Suspense* scenario remains very compelling.

There is another wrinkle to this: It was Lee's unvarying rule when launching these secondary superheros in the various fantasy books to simply plot them, leaving it to brother Larry Lieber to do the finished scripting. Stan seemed to save his scripting for characters who had their own titles, and whether the new version of *Amazing Adult Fantasy*:

"We hate to throw in the towel, but we find that it is simply impossible to produce a magazine like AMAZING each and every month, containing five highly and carefully plotted stories, without the quality eventually beginning to suffer. Rather than risk losing your confidence, we have decided to change AMAZING in such a way that it will STILL present the finest in fantasy–but in a different way!

This seems strange reasoning. Lee and Ditko had been producing a half-dozen five pagers a month for four years without a problem and would continue to do so for another year and a

"We hate to throw in the towel, but we find that it is simply impossible to produce a magazine like Amazing [Adult Fantasy] ... without the quality

half. *Amazing Fantasy* #15 remained all Ditko, so the addition of an 11-page Spider-Man continuing feature would seem more work for the busy duo, not less.

As Ditko points out in his *History of Comics* article:

"With this story our working method was obviously more involved than with the five pagers because the ideas were greater. There were more characters, action, drama and complexities. There were continuing characters (main and supporting), all with different personality types, on-going relationships, personal problems and conflicts. The heroes and villains had various motives and powers to be exploited. All needed consistency yet development and growth had to be considered."

In his *Amazing Fantasy* #15 editorial, Lee goes on to say:

"As you can see, we are introducing one of the most unusual new fantasy characters of all time–The Spiderman, who will appear every month in AMAZING. Perhaps, if your letters request it, we will make his stories even longer, or have TWO Spiderman stories per issue."

Very clearly, Lee has plans for Spider-Man. He's essentially hinting *Amazing Fantasy* might develop into a book like *The Incredible Hulk*, then featuring two Hulk stories per issue.

In fact, there's a blurb at the bottom of the Spider-Man story that's been left off all reprints for years, which again promises a new Spider-Man story in *Amazing Fantasy* #16:

"Be sure to see the next issue of AMAZING FANTASY–for the further amazing exploits of America's most DIFFERENT new teenage idol–SPIDERMAN."

Why would Lee promise more Spider-Man stories if *Amazing Fantasy* had been scheduled to expire with issue #15? And how could he promise more if there weren't many more?

The truth seems clear... *Amazing Fantasy* hadn't been canceled at the time issue #15 was in production. And there was at least one more Spider-Man tale in inventory. There had to be. *Amazing Fantasy* was, after all, a monthly. During its *Amazing Adult Fantasy* period... it often featured a coming attractions page for the next issue, indicating the next issue was already drawn while the prior one was going into production.

Job Numbers!

My proof? It lies in what Marvel still calls to this day, job numbers. They are codes assigned to every story for schedule tracking and inventory control purposes. In the 1960s, these job numbers usually appeared on the splash pages of Marvel stories, tucked away in a lower corner. For example, the first Spider-Man story in *Amazing Fantasy* #15 is labeled V-789. The remaining stories in the issue are coded V-792, V-791 and V-780. (The last one may be a typo for V-790).

Job numbers are usually consecutive or nearly consecutive within an issue. Occasionally, there is what I call a wild card number, indicating a story brought forward from old, unused inventory. And they invariably run consecutively through Marvel titles published in a given month, and from month to month.

For example, the V series began with V-1 and ran to V-999 and is found in 1960-61 titles. The prefix changed near the end of 1962 in the titles cover-dated January 1963. That's when the X-series began, covering 1962-63 inventory. These one-letter prefixes change on a bi-annual basis like clockwork. And with only a few exceptions, they are relentlessly consecutive.

Another example, the Thor origin story from *Journey Into Mystery* #83 is coded V-786. The Ditko tale that closes out the issue, "When the Jungle Sleeps," is V-788, which happens to be

eventually beginning to suffer."

the number immediately before the first Spider-Man story.

By collating these code numbers, you can pretty much tell the order of the stories and issues being routed through the production schedule in a given month. As it developed, Amazing *Spider-Man* #1 came out the same month as *Tales Of Suspense* #39, both cover-dated March 1963. The Iron Man origin story was coded X-51, but the lead Spider-Man story, which is untitled, was coded V-816... seriously out of sequence.

How far out of sequence?

Well, the next nearest job number I can find to V-816 is V-814, which happens to be the code attached to the Ditko back-

up feature in *Strange Tales* #100, "The Mighty Oak." *Strange Tales* #100 was cover-dated September 1962.

Yes, September 1962... the same month in which *Amazing Fantasy* #16 would have been published. Based on a rigorous analysis of these job numbers, I am led to an inescapable conclusion: that the 14 pager leading off *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 was prepared for *Amazing Fantasy* #16, but unceremoniously shelved when the title was abruptly canceled.

Why this strange sequence of events?

I can only guess, but the answer probably lies in Lee's imperfect recollections of events. Let's assume Lee got the go-ahead to publish *Amazing Fantasy* #15, with Goodman's reservations on Spider-Man hanging over his editorial head. While #16 was being prepared, Goodman might have seen a mock up of #15, and been repelled by the Spider-Man concept. "I'm canceling it", he tells Lee. More probably it was as simple as weak sales figures coming in on an earlier issue after *Amazing Fantasy* #15 had gone to press. Kill it, orders Goodman. Spider-Man can't save *Amazing Fantasy*.

And since *Amazing Fantasy* #15 had already gone to press, Stan can do nothing about his promises of a new *Amazing Fantasy* to his readers. All that salvage work–changing the title, format, and redrawing the cover was seemingly for nothing.

More Evidence

As conclusive as the job number evidence is, there's more. A careful examination of *Amazing Spider-Man* #1 shows that the inking styles of the lead story and the Chameleon backup are markedly different. The space capsule story is rendered in the simplified inking style of *Amazing Fantasy* #15, while the moodier Chameleon tale inking is contemporary with Ditko's shadowy *Fantastic Four* #13 inks, cover-dated April 1963. A wide interval clearly separated the two Spider-Man stories. Otherwise, the ever-conscientious Ditko would have made certain the inking styles of both stories, not to mention costume details, were consistent.

This might also explain why Peter Parker is called Peter Palmer in the backup Chameleon story. Stan, in returning to the strip after a layoff of several months, simply misremembered the name.

It might also explain why the strip logo–normally a stat slapped on the splash pages, is not in uniform.

And there is this oddity: Spider-Man's underarm webbing in *Amazing Fantasy* #15 is ribbed like Batman's cloak. In the space capsule story, it's straight-edged and meshlike. In the Chameleon story, as well as the contents of *Amazing Spider-Man* #2 & #3, it reverts to the creepy hanging cobweb look. With *Amazing Spider-Man* #4, the straight-edged net webbing returns for good.

This at first suggests that Lee and Ditko assembled Spider-Man stories for *Amazing Fantasy* #16... and #17! But the magazine's untimely demise threw them into the unused inventory bin. And when the decision to give Spider-Man his own magazine was implemented, the space capsule story was drawn to reintroduce the character and lead off that historic first issue, with one of the other inventory stories rounding out the issue.

A nice, neat theory... but guess what? The job numbers and other internal evidence don't support it.

The Chameleon story is uncoded, as is the lead Vulture tale in *Amazing Spider-Man* #2. The Tinkerer backup is coded X-171 which makes it contemporary with Marvel books cover-dated May 1963–the release month for *Amazing Spider-Man*

"As you can see, we are introducing one of the most unusual new fantasy characters of all time----The SPIDERMAN, who will appear every month in AMAZING."

#2. The Doctor Octopus issue, #3, is also in sync with July titles. Without job numbers, the truth seems undiscoverable. Except for the hyphen in Spider-Man!

The hyphen

The hyphen in Spider-Man is present in most logos from the beginning, Spider-Man is spelled Spiderman (no hyphen) in the origin and space capsule stories. It doesn't become standard usage until "Spider-Man vs. The Chameleon," indicating the earliest stories were done in strict order.

Here is what I think really happened:

"With this story [Spider-Man] our working method was obviously more involved than with the five pagers [in Amazing Adult Fantasy]."
–Steve Ditko

At minimum, Spider-Man stories for *AF* #15 & #16 were prepared in the spring of 1962. *AF*'s cancellation stops Spider-Man strip production. That fall or winter, when Ditko was told Spider-Man would get his own title, he was commissioned to draw the Chameleon story to round out that first issue. Having only a copy of *AF* #15 for reference, he copies the prototypal costume design, having forgotten he modified the underarm webbing in that second, still unpublished, space capsule story. Remember, at least six months have passed since Ditko drew the space capsule story. Ditko follows that costume style for three issues, then *ASM* #1 comes out. He rereads his old story, now nearly a year old, and is reminded of his own webbing change, so he reinstitutes that change in *ASM* #4, the Sandman story.

The rest is history.

Two Stray Stories?

One nagging question remains: If the space capsule story was set to lead off *Amazing Fantasy* #16, what were the backup stories?

Logically, it would be a pair of typical Ditko five pagers to bring the page count up to the usual 25 pages. A search through the Ditko fantasy backups up to the end of 1962 doesn't show any of the numbers that immediately follow V-816 (many stories display no job numbers at all).

However, a month after *Amazing Spider-Man* debuts, a Mistake" in *Tales to Astonish* #43 (May 1963). It was unusual among the Ditko five pagers of 1963 in that it lacked a credit box. Stan Lee had instituted them early in 1963. "Prophet of Doom!" likewise lacked a credit box. "My Fatal Mistake" .oomed very likely as the final story in *Amazing Fantasy* #16, but without a job number I couldn't quite prove it.

Intil I noticed something I should have noticed before. The story lettering for "My Fatal Mistake" struck a chord in my col-.ector's memory. It was the distinctive but understated jet-black Art Simek lettering. The same style had adorned "Prophet of Doom!" And, as a check of my collection of *Amazing Adult Fantasy* quickly proved, it was the signature typography Lee imposed on virtually every story that ran in that magazine since it became *Amazing Adult Fantasy* and nowhere else–except in those two stray stories!

Here then was the final proof that *Amazing Fantasy* #16 would have featured a lead Spider-Man story and two obscure but historically significant fantasy tales–significant because they were the last stories created for *Amazing Fantasy*.

Bottom Line

One unsolved mystery remains. What would the cover to *AF* #16 have been? Clearly not the cover of *ASM* #1. It illustrated the Chameleon backup story. Since the cover is that last piece of artwork prepared for a comic, maybe there wasn't one.

Still, you have to wonder if somewhere in some dusty Marvel

Ditko backup story called "Prophet of Doom!" appears in the back of *Tales Of Suspense* #40, April 1963.

Its job number? V-817. This suggested to me that Lee had put the entire contents of *AF* #16 aside instead of redistributing the Ditko five pagers among other magazines.

With that in mind, I searched forward through the pages of *Tales Of Suspense* and its companion titles. Unfortunately, job number V-818 failed to show up. The usual number of uncoded splash pages suggested the story would be forever unidentifiable.

Then I noticed an anomaly in a tale called "My Fatal

file there isn't an unseen Steve Ditko Spider-Man cover… created for that unpublished, but very real final issue of *Amazing Fantasy*?

But the bottom line is this: Spider-Man was launched as an ongoing series, and it was only an abrupt cancellation of his original host magazine that interrupted the flow of stories from Ditko's pen. Only a few pages separate the two stories in *Amazing Spider-Man* #1, but in reality a good six months passed between the time Ditko finished the first and began the other… a gap during which the fate of the most successful superhero of the Silver Age of comics hung in the balance. ■

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The Forgotten Master

Little-known works and moods of Wally Wood

BY LINK YACO

ABOVE: An example of Wood's use of 2-point lighting. (From The Outer Space Spirit, 1952.)

COURTESY KITCHEN SINK PRESS

RIGHT: Wood's unique rendering of the feminine form is a novel combination of buxomness, sensuality, and ideal form. These qualities make many of his beauties seem as if they were taken right out of a Ruben's painting. (From The Wizard King limited edition, 1978, by Wallace Wood.)

Once one of the best known comics artists, now he is known only to a few. Even at the height of his renown, no one really knew who he was. Sure, they knew he drew or inked *Superman, Batman, Captain America, Daredevil, Ironman, Flash Gordon, Terry and the Pirates, Prince Valiant,* and *Jungle Jim*... but his most fascinating work was the stuff few people saw. Collectors paid, and continue to pay top dollar for Wood's better-known EC work but there is a wealth of more obscure work, available at much cheaper prices, that is just as highly coveted by true connoisseurs.

Who was Wood? A genial tutor of many young artists or a sleepless, driven perfectionist? A visual genius or merely a gifted illustrator of children's work who strained beyond his reach?

He was a man of contradictions. He was a forceful, self-directed personality... yet ultimately he committed suicide. He had a clean, almost machine-like style, yet his oeuvre reeks of horrific nightmares drawn with near photographic clarity

ABOVE: **Wally Wood's famous self-portrait from the last panel of the story "My World" originally published in Weird Science #22 (Nov/ Dec 1953), the last issue.**

straight out of the id, much like the more self-conscious work of Robert Crumb. Wood drew more mainstream characters than any other artist of his time, yet he was an independent publisher, one of the first, along with, again, Robert Crumb, to produce adult American comics for mass distribution. If a comparison between Wood and Crumb seems far-fetched, bear in mind that the early *MAD* was a major influence on Crumb, and Wood was one of the seminal illustrators of *MAD* for its first 10 years.

a weird little kid

Wallace Allan Wood, born June 17, 1927, in Menahga, Minnesota, filled his childhood notebooks with fantastic dreamlike images inspired by the radio shows and comic strips of his time. The visions of demons, netherworld wastelands, and mythic warriors that resulted, however, were not mere imitation. They had the internal consistency of a fully realized fantasy, and the imaginative resonance of an uncensored mind in touch with a Jungian fascination with archetypes of power, corruption, and veiled sexuality, all conveyed with simplicity and utility. If that sounds overly academic, take a look yourself. Weird stuff, eh?

By his mid-teens, Wood had already achieved a unique synthesis of his influences. His characters already have the distinctive cleft beneath the nose that is one of his signature touches. It is easy to point to Milt Caniff and Hal Foster as stylistic sources, but the unique Wood approach to lighting is already apparent, and seemingly derivative of no one.

lighting and the influence of German expressionism

The movies of his youth might have been as big an influence as anything. Film Noir was, retroactively, the term applied to the darkly-lit, moody crime films of the '30s. The *Maltese Falcon* is a prime example. Cinematographers such as Greg Tolland (notably in *Citizen Kane*) and James Wong Howe (*The Thin Man*) borrowed and refined the angular, harsh lighting of the German Expressionist filmmakers, who were expressing the increasingly repressive atmosphere of Germany at the time. When directors like Fritz Lang fled to the financial and political freedom of the US and Hollywood, they brought with them the highly stylized manner of lighting they had learned in the under-budgeted German studios where the only affordable set was composed of a few walls and crazily angled shadows. These early films looked like a Steve Ditko comic. The later, American film Noirs looked like Wood--or rather, Wood looked like them. Wood's signature mannerism was his high contrast, two-point lighting.

Bear with me--I'm going to get a bit technical for a just a brief paragraph. Ready? Here we go: In film, the strongest, and most important light is called the "key" light, located about 45 degrees above the subject, and 45 degrees to the side. This casts harsh shadows which are then filled in with a "fill" light, located to the opposite side of the subject, at a negative 45 degree tilt. This is where a natural "bounce" light would occur, as a light source would reflect off the ground beneath the subject. Finally,

COME IN, COLONEL MARTIN... WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT DO YOU SEE OUT THERE IN SPACE?
IT'S ATTACKING ME!!!
ON THE EVE OF SKY'S ASCENT INTO SPACE A FEAR-WRACKED VISION OF THE MAN WHO PRECEDED HIM HAUNTS HIS SLEEPING HOURS...

ABOVE An example of the landmark newspaper strip, "Sky Masters of the Space Force" (1959).

tough neighborhoods

Fortunately for Wood, he was able to get out of farm country and attend Burne Hogarth's Cartoonists and Illustrators School, in New York City. There, he started to meet all the Italian and Jewish kids from the tough neighborhoods, some of them with the same vivid powers of visualization as himself. Wood got along with them well enough but he always had a mid-Western reserve that prevented him from really connecting with these guys.

When Wood drew, it was as if he were tracing a picture he saw in his mind. Some of these tough city kids had the same quality to their work. Frank Frazetta was one, Al Williamson (who grew up in South America), was another. Joe Orlando wasn't quite in the same league, but he was good enough for Wood to take on as a junior partner. He and Wood held all-night sessions to beat deadlines. They worked so closely that they were actually drawing on the same page together, at the same time… one pencilling while the other inked.

Wood started to do romance comics for Fox in late 1949. In 1950, he branched out into crime, horror, and science fiction for Avon, Ziff-Davis, Youthful Magazines, and EC. Work from this period, especially his *Captain Science* for Avon, done with Orlando, is as collectible as his EC work.

For a short period in the mid-'40s, Wood worked as an assistant in the Will Eisner shop. The resemblance of Wood's style to Eisner's has often been remarked upon, but it is largely a case of parallel evolution. Although the 15 year old Wood had imitated Eisner, the adult Wood's work with Eisner was brief and consisted mostly of lettering duties.

Wood worked, also briefly, with another partner, Harry Harrison, who later became a science fiction writer, and wrote the book that became the movie *Soylent Green*.

Soon, Wood was working solo, and exclusively for EC. There, with all the immigrants' grandsons, like the Jewish Gaines, Feldstein, and Kurtzman, he worked on the original *MAD* comic book. They were amazed to see how wacky the quiet goyim could be. His satires of *Pogo* were so liked by Walt Kelly that he returned the favor and had his cartoon possum discuss Wood's name in a bizarre and obscure tribute.

In 1952, as his work for EC brought him a reputation as the pre-eminent science fiction stylist, Wood returned to Eisner to ghost a cycle of science fiction stories for *The Spirit*. This only lasted a few weeks, but the results were fascinating. Although there are striking similarities in brush technique (with Wood imitating Eisner's "pocket" shading technique), Eisner's Spirit has a colorful, urban quality, and Wood's version is blockier, more rigid, and, face it, more gentile.

Wood's work always reflected an Anglo sensibility. Characters were stocky and stout. The Wood angles were filled with oak trees, unlike Williamson's Amazonian improvisations. Given a chance, Wood would inevitably draw granite castles and thatched cottages. His futuristic science fiction stories are filled with the architecture of medieval England.

out on the street

In 1955 EC went out of the comics business and only *MAD*, in magazine form, survived. Wood moved into advertising, where he worked on the award-winning Alka Seltzer campaign, "Stomachs Get even at Night," and other commercial work as well as album covers, book jacket paintings (notably for ACE science fiction), and science fiction magazine illustration. His work, which had been notable for its cluttered detail, became sparer, and even more evocative. Although his work showed less obsessive line work and ornamentation, he was still working marathon sessions, often skipping on sleep and proper food. The effects were beginning to tell.

He worked on a wide range of projects, too many to mention.

but notably, he was an unaccredited assistant on *Flash Gordon*, *Terry & the Pirates*, and *Prince Valiant*. Then in 1958, he joined Jack Kirby to work on his *Sky Masters* strip, and ultimately returned to mainstream comic book work in the late '50s with Kirby on *The Challengers of the Unknown* for DC.

Wood also continued to work for *MAD* magazine, although the work grew sporadic and he left it altogether in 1964. Toward the end of this period, one *MAD* worker noticed that Wood's skin was absolutely yellow and he looked liked the unhealthiest person alive.

back into the fold

Starting in the 1964, he did several books for Marvel. At this point, his style was at its full maturity, and it did not vary until his health failed almost two decades later. He had reached the height of austerity and minimalism, and was fully confident. When he had inked Kirby in the '50s, he had virtually repencilled everything. Now, he was capable of inking from little more than the sparest layouts.

He took over *Daredevil* from his former protegé Orlando… and redesigned the character's suit. He inked *The Avengers*, *Ironman*, and *Captain America*.

He worked for many other companies as well. Some curiosities include one episode of a science fiction hero for Harvey called *"Earthman," Flash Gordon* for King, a number of eight-pagers for Warren's *Creepy* and *Eerie*, and some never-published mini-comic satires of superheros for Topps Bubblegum comics.

Then Wood moved on to Tower… to design the *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* with Len Brown, a writer at Topps. His assistant (Orlando had been more in the order of a partner, if only a junior one) joined him at this time. Dan Adkins had missing front teeth and spoke with a hillbilly Virginia accent, but like Wood, was a soft-spoken introvert. His style reflected Wood's but was finer lined. with lankier figures and conveyed elegance and repose more than power and action. Whereas Wood's faces were formulaic and chiseled, as if out of granite, or... wood, Adkins tended to be more realistic, with softer, more rounded features.

Adkins, who now has a successful commercial career, suffered two setbacks when he came out from under Wood's wing and went to work for Marvel in 1968. Firstly, Marvel pressured him to imitate the thick-lined, Joe Sinnott-inspired house style. Adkins rapidly became a technically proficient inker, but it

ABOVE: **No one can draw the interior machinery of spacecraft like Wally! This splash panel from the story "The Has-Been" (Incredible Science Fiction #31, Sep/Oct 1955) is a little-used example.**

LEFT: **Illustration from Galaxy science fiction magazine, where Wood contributed art from 1957 to 1967.**

COURTESY OLA FROST

Considered by collectors to be one of the greatest splash panels in the history of sci-fi comics, Wood's opener to "My World" is literally packed with details and almost overwhelms the eye of the reader.

seemed as if all the love went out of his work... and it became more brittle and awkward.

Secondly, Adkins was summarily fired by Marvel for allegedly plagiarizing others' work. This charge was grossly and unfairly exaggerated. Adkins often lifted images and incorporated them, but he did this in a spirit of artistic tribute, not plagiarism. He utilized classical paintings, famous photographs, vintage comic strips such as *Prince Valiant*, and masterwork comic books, such as Reed Crandall's work from EC's *MD* comic. Crandall, who was alive at the time, was not at all concerned that his *MD* work (which had received precious little distribution, let alone recognition) was being used in this manner.

Wood the maverick

By the time Adkins was working for Marvel, Wood had left mainstream comics, for the second time. As was common practice in those days, Wood never received any royalties for use of his super-hero costume designs. This might have been one of the reasons for his disenchantment with the industry, and his move toward self-publishing. This was probably the most exciting and optimistic period of his life. Inspired by the developing comic book fandom and attendant fanzines, he published *Witzend*, an experimental, open-format, often racy, high-quality comic. Witzend was never a financial success but it was the first independent comic and through its publication, Wood formed a partnership with Spider-Man-creator Steve Ditko, who had quit when Marvel (read Stan Lee) appropriated control of his character (there was this argument about the secret identity of the Green Goblin. These guys took this stuff seriously!).

Wood and Ditko worked on many projects over the years, including *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, *Cannon*, and the appallingly written (by the usually quite capable Paul Levitz) *Stalker* for DC in the early '70s. Wood was genial and accommodating, even though obsessed with his work to the point of skipping on food and sleep and relying on caffeine, cigarettes, and, booze to keep him going. Occasionally, however, Wood experienced mood swings that verged upon complete changes of personality. Even so, all his personalities could draw like crazy, so he was forgiven a lot. Ditko, by contrast, was (and is) a consistently, rock steady, opinionated crank (I say this affectionately), unbending in his business and political ideas which included an autodidactic interest in libertarianism and Ayn Rand.

Both Wood and Ditko, however, were independent entrepreneurial types. The most obscure thing they ever did together was probably *Jungle Jim* for Charlton in about 1968. They did two or maybe even three issues. It was obviously done quickly, but the two were at the height of their powers. Pat Boyette, who took over the book afterward, recalls that Charlton aquired the Wood/Ditko material when they bought King Comics' inventory. Boyette also recalls Wood telling him that he really enjoyed inking Ditko's pencils.

Wood managed to keep doing comics, without working for the majors. He did material for *The Overseas Weekly*, a military newspaper. He drew two racy strips, *Sally Forth* and *Cannon*, and produced a third, *Shattuck*, which was

Illustrated primarily by his assistants, (Ralph Reese, Dave Cockrum, Howard Chaykin, and others) and often inked by DC pro, Jack Abel. Other assistants over the years, were Roger Brand, Wayne Howard, Bill Pearson, Peter Hsu, and Paul Kirchner. All of his assistants report an informal and close relationship with Wood. They all started filling in blacks. Black "spotting," according to Wood, was one of his strongest design tools. He would fill in black where ever he could, and then see if he could spot some more opportunities to fill in even more. Wood's deep shadows defined and modeled his forms to a degree beyond almost anyone else in the industry. Combined with the machine-like precision of his brush line work (his brush lines are almost indistinguishable from the craftint and zipatone lines he loved to apply to his work), Wood's work set the standard for the period.

Kirchner, in a preface to his collection (mostly of work from Heavy Metal), *Realms*, wrote that in 1975, when working in Wood's studio, he had told Wood about a dream he'd had. "He and I were walking through the labyrinthine corridors that led to his small studio apartment...Soon we...had passed into some other dimension...a lighted wrestling ring, around which clustered a few humans and a number of loathsome, grotesque aliens.... a fellow human...explained that the matches were being held to decide who would go to Earth... the loser would be the one that would make the trip.

'That's great!' I responded. 'Since we *want* to go to Earth, we have only to lose the match and we're set.'

'It's not that easy,' my compatriot explained. 'the aliens want to go to Earth also. So they, too, will try to lose. The question is whether you can stand wrestling with them as long as they can stand wrestling with you.' "

Woody told me "...the dream was about being in the comic business. The goal was to tell the stories you wanted to tell, to get your fantasies into print. The unsavory characters with whom you had to grapple were the editors and publishers who stood in your way." The question remained: who would outlast who? Who would prevail?

Wood continued to self-publish. He released collections of *Carmon* and *Sally Forth*, and several other projects, such as a set of historical posters, and books based on his *Wizard King* character, that he continued to produce until his death. But he lavished far more attention on these projects than the financial return warranted, and by the early seventies, he was forced to return to mainstream comics.

back to the corporations

His enthusiasm for DC's *All-Star Squadron* was evident in the carefully done reconstructions of a Joe Shuster-style *Superman*. Later, he worked on *Kull, Dr. Doom*, and other books for Marvel. But perhaps he wearied of the routine of putting out a monthly book, for he never stayed on one book for long. Then his drinking, always dangerously excessive, caused a series of four strokes, and ultimately led to kidney failure.

HOPE WE DON'T SLIP UP OR WE'LL NEVER LIVE TO BE BORN AGAIN!
THAT'S RIGHT! IF WE DIE, WE'LL HAVE DIED THOUSANDS OF YEARS BEFORE WE WERE EVEN BORN IT'S ENOUGH TO DRIVE YOU CRAZY!

ABOVE: **Only Wally put Knights in space as illustrated by this medieval space age scene from Captain Science #4 (1951).**

COURTESY BHB (BHOB AN BEARDEN) & ANTARCTIC

The last four years of his life were the worst. He suffered pronounced mood swings, and the genial Wood of old, alternated with a raging suicidal personality. He drank constantly and almost never slept. His health grew worse.

Toward the end of his life he returned to one-shot assignments. His hand grew shakier but he continued to find work. One day he walked into Marvel and asked for work. An editor tossed him a *Daredevil* (#164) cover. It was his last Marvel work, on the same book he'd started on. It was certainly not his best work. In fact, it was barely recognizable as his style. Ironically, Daredevil is a blind superhero, and Wood's sight was failing.

Finally, the only work he could consistently hold on to was pornography. He had pioneered independently published erotic material in the '60s, and it had seemed racy and clever then, but now such publishing was routine and strictly exploitative.

Wood's health continued to deteriorate and finally he faced complete renal shut-down. His friends put together a fund to send him to California for a colostomy operation but once he was there, faced with the grim reality of his condition, he chose to take his own life on November 2, 1981.

Wood had been commonly acknowledged as one of the very best craftsmen and stylists around but before the decade was over, it was possible to go to a comic book convention, ask for work by Wood, and get a blank stare. This industry, dependent as it is on the evanescent buying power of 10 to 20 year olds, has a very short memory. Within five years of his death, Bhob Stewart had written a comprehensive index to Wood's work, which was supplemented with large amounts of his unpublished sketches. The book has languished at Fantagraphics ever since, presumably stalled by the expensive and complicated

DO YOU THINK THAT PREMOLNTS BRAT OF THE COCCINELLIDAE FAMILY WILL HURT HIS CHANCES?
ALL DEPENDS.. DO IT BY ON A MARQUISE OUTSIDE A TV STUDIO?
MMM... IT'S ABOUT THAT LONG.
A-SO, CAN YOU SPELL IT BABY?
WELL.. IT'S GOT A SET OF DOUBLE LETTERS
A GOOD SIGN! ALL PRESIDENTS USUAL GOT THAT.
THIS BOY'S GOT TWO SETS... CC AND LL!
HE'S A SHOO-IN ... WHO'S GONNA BEAT THAT?
EVER HEAR OF MALLY WOOD? DOUBLE M, A, DOUBLE L, Y, DOUBLE W, DOUBLE O, D..
WAIT! WAIT!

HAH! AND I SUPPOSEN'T NOW YOU'D GIVE YOUR BOTTOM DOLLAR FOR ME TO SNIFF YOUR PERFUME I SUPPOSEN'T.
WHERE'ZAT OL' BOTTOM DOLLAR?
HANDS OFF!

TOP: **Pogo discusses Wally Wood in the the Pogo Extra, Election Special (Simon & Shuster, 1960).**

COURTESY THE BEST OF POGO SIMON AND SCHUSTER 1980

ABOVE: **Wood's parody of Superduperman & Lois Pain from MAD #4 (Apr/May 1953) is still a classic.**

convincing, and all the more interesting for their resemblance to bodily forms, most usually female forms. His monsters were straight out of the id and one need not be a dyed-in-the-wool Freudian to recognize walking genitalia when one sees them. As no one else in comics, Wood's work resonates with the heterosexually-oriented American male of the early Boom era. You might not like the work (especially if you are female) but you cannot argue the effectiveness with which he created his coherent vision.

There is one image that recurs in Wood's work that is not sexual: that of the death's head; the skull. as apparent in the last science fiction comic he ever did. Pat Boyette recalls asking Wood to do it for his Cosmic Book. Wood had great difficulty working on it but was very pleased with the results. He was only able to ink it in felt tip but expressed hope that he might be able to work in brush soon. Boyette then painted the two page strip in color. In a curious feat of reverse engineering, David Spurlock later reconstructed the original underlying art and inked it in the style of Wood at his prime. It ends with a great, classic Wood image–the death's head. It shows up in Wood's architecture, machinery, costumes, and alien creatures. Sometimes Wood's image of death was associated with sexual imagery, but was never subsumed by it. It shows a young boy's fascination with the roller-coaster ride thrill of mortal threats.

To the young Wood, as to all of us when we are young, mortality was something from Grimm's fairy tales, Lights Out radio theater, and the movies. It was scary, exciting, but never real. As Wood matured. death never became real to him. His self-destructive use of caffeine, cigarettes, alcohol, and junk food (yes, your mother was right–if you don't eat your vegetables, you'll never grow up) shows a refusal–or inability–to recognize the realities of nutritional need. Ultimately, Wood had an inability to come to terms with his own physical limitations. Ah me, but how well do any of us manage that? ■

death to the kid from the id

He was a child who never grew up (with all that implies), and from an early age he had powers of visualization strong enough to develop his pre-to-early-adolescent symbolic fantasies to an incredibly detailed level. This enabled him to communicate, unfiltered by the maturation that results from a long learning curve, his unrestrained appetite for simple, primal pleasures and his proto-sexual fantasies. They were all iterated without the embellishment and clutter of adulthood. Wood's women were quintessential Marilyn Monroe heifers, plump and pouty, rounded and glistening like candied apples. This sort of objectification is sometimes frowned upon in today's society because it is believed that it can lead to depersonalization. In Wood's case, it was certainly true… exemplified by his own self-destructive obsession with pornography at the end of his life.

Wood's men were chiseled blocks of stone, iconic, heroic, stoic, mythic, father figures. His machinery and architecture were convoluted arches, curves, spires, and domes that were

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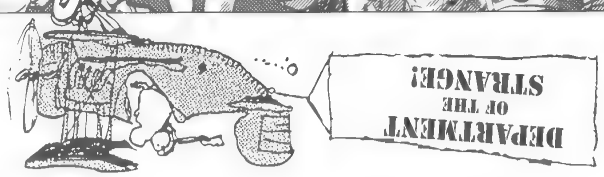


WOOD ALL OVER THE PLACE

BY LOU MOUGIN

Wally Wood was everybody's hero. Jim Steranko said that he got into comics because of Wally Wood. Will Eisner chose him to illustrate the "outer space" episodes of The Spirit. Woody and Al Williamson were virtually EC's science fiction art department. When Stan Lee brought in Wally to draw Daredevil in 1965, he trumpeted it with a blurb on the cover and even let him write a single issue on his own. The T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents were his creations, save for Dynamo, which was his regular Tower Comics art assignment, and they're the best-remembered non-Marvel/non-DC superhero comics of the '60s!

Yeah, Wally was everybody's hero. Except, perhaps, his own.

Since we all know the end of that story, let's talk about some of the things Wally did in the Sixties. Now, we're not gonna talk about his stuff at Marvel, or his stuff at Tower, or his stuff at DC, or his stuff at Warren. Most likely, *CBU* readers are familiar with that … as they should be.

Let's take a look at some of the more obscure stuff that Wally lent his hand to — after all, Wally made a point of working for almost every comic publisher in existence back then. He even started his own fanzine, *Witzend*, for projects too outré for the mainstream. There may even be some Wood work that nobody's yet brought to light, because, believe it or not, Wally wasn't credited for every time he put pencil or pen to paper. I'm convinced that a single page of a 1978 Justice League story bears his inks (ain't gonna tell you which!), and one of Bob Brown's Challengers of the Unknown stories looks a lot like Wally did an uncredited ink job.

Calling Wally Wood a workhorse would probably be elevating the power of the horse. He could work for longer stretches without sleep than anybody this side of Jim Steranko (and Steranko sleeps so little he probably doesn't understand The Sandman). As Dan Adkins once put it, "Wally was Superman."

Or perhaps more precisely, Wally was Dynamo.

Wood-Work at Charlton

It was at Charlton Comics that Wally did one of his first re-entry jobs, coming back to comics after his long, honorable tenure at *MAD*. The year was 1964, and the book was *War And Attack* #1.

The cover isn't by Wally (probably it's the work of Sam Glanzman), so the title is worth remembering if you're planning to hunt for this one in a dealer's "bargain" box. Inside, Wally polishes off four stories. "Death In Darkness" (about a paratrooper with a case of the willies), "One-Man Mission" (concerning a frogman leading an island resistance movement against the Japanese), "The Prisoner In Chateau Beaujais" (a commando rescues a French general from the Gestapo), and "3rd Chance To Die" (which traces a Marine's career from Guadalcanal to the Korean War).

The stories are all probably written by Joe Gill, whose use of the past tense in his captions betrays his identity. All four tales are pretty cut-and-dried war fare–or warfare–with that ugly machined lettering Charlton was infamous for. And (truthfully) Wally didn't do a top-notch job on this issue. But there are places where his light shines through… when a Nazi tank takes a bazooka round in story 1, in some of the combat scenes of story 2, on the splash of story 4, and in the winter combat scenes of story 4.

It's evident that Wally really wasn't knocking himself out on *War And Attack* #1. Charlton never paid much, and Gill's scripts, truth to tell, weren't all that inspiring. But Wally was getting back in the game with this issue, and, if you can find it at a decent price, *War and Attack* #1 is a nifty addition to any Wood collection. It's also a neat one to pull out and tell your fan friends, "See if you can guess who did the art on this one!"

Wood-Work at Gold Key

A few months later, Wally redeemed himself with a decent job for Gold Key. Boris Karloff *Tales Of Mystery* #9 (March 1965) is the one to look for. Since Gold Key didn't put issue numbers on their covers, just remember that the cover on this one shows a disembodied, armored hand holding a golden sword, from which a black-bearded bad guy is fleeing in the

background. Wood may have executed this painting, but with no signature on it–we'll have to await an expert's verdict (someone like Wood aficionado Roger Hill perhaps).

At any rate, the lead story, "Vengeance of the Armored Arm", is Woody's. It opens with a gorgeous scene of knights jousting on horseback before a castle, and there is some air of EC's "Trial By Arms" coming through in it. The black-armored Baron Raiford is fighting the white-clad good guy Sir Mansfield. Boris Karloff, the host (who looks

M.A.R.S. Patrol Total War #3 (Gold Key, 1966).

just as Wally drew him in "The Mummy" for Monster World some months earlier) turns to us and says, "Well the vassals of Castle Carnbury should cringe, for this was no ordinary jousting match . . . their very souls hung in the balance!" The denouement would come within the 12 pages of this tale.

Briefly, Sir Mansfield does defeat Baron Raiford, who is his cousin, and is awarded Castle Carnbury as per his late uncle's will. Mansfield leaves on the morrow for an unspecified war, charging his wicked cousin to take care of the estate while he's gone. "Treat all these vassals kindly or feel my wrath when I return!" he warns. Later, Raiford hires a medieval hitman and puts a contract out on Mansfield, telling the killer that if he fails, the gold that was to pay him will be melted and poured down his throat. Sweet guy.

After Mansfield takes his leave, in a lovely panel straight out of Prince Valiant, Raiford rides roughshod over the commoners. But, when he draws his sword and attempts to execute a peon who displeases him, Raiford is halted by a disembodied, flying armored hand. The hand grabs Raiford's sword, makes a few passes at his chest to keep him in line, then breaks the sword and throws it at him in two pieces. Raiford runs like a scalded dog and locks himself in his room. But news from the battlefield that Mansfield has fallen cheers him up. Like Macbeth, Raiford convinces himself that his persecutor was only a figment of his imagination.

But nothing is ever imaginary in a Gold Key horror comic. No sooner has Raiford resumed the throne than the hand comes clanking up to him like Thing from "The Addams Family." It snatches away his ring of keys, trundles up a set of stairs, yanks a lever that lowers a drawbridge, helps push the drawbridge into place, and then launches itself at Raiford's throat. Raiford and the hand plummet into the castle's moat and neither come up again.

This is done in the sight of Sir Mansfield, who is just coming back from the wars. It is true that he had fallen in battle, but he had not been killed. He just lost his...arm... And, as Boris tells us in a last-panel appearance, "When Raiford's body was recovered...the armored arm had vanished!"

Okay by me, Boris. It can stay vanished.

A few months later, Wood created one of the most "complete" comics ever for Gold Key, in the sense of it being a satisfying, self-contained, well-done epic in one issue, though he stayed for two more. He wrote it, drew it, and painted the cover, upon which four American soldiers in colorful getups blasted away at an enemy tank battalion–in the streets of New York City. The book was *Total War*!

Total War #1, May 1965, was Gold Key's greatest adventure issue since *Magnus Robot Fighter* #1. The book-length story, "Target America", opened with an eerie sight of purple-clad enemy troops making a 2 A.M. landing in Atlantic City, New Jersey on July 4th of an unspecified near-future year. Wally may have been inspired by the "Purple Empire" serial in the *Operator No. 5* pulp of the 1930s, in which America underwent similar enemy invasion. But the depiction of the troops and tanks moving forth from naval transports onto the Jersey beach deliberately invoked another image. It was an alien D-Day.

A beat cop was the first American to notice the landing. He rushed to a phone booth and just managed to get inside before an unsmiling invader wasted him with a submachine gun. All the troops looked the same: purple suits, purple helmets with the patented Wood "two-horned antenna" and green visor, and purple tanks and ships that bore the same symbol–a black crab inside a yellow circle.

Later issues would establish the enemy troops, known as "baldies" from their lack of hair, as invaders from space. But in this issue, we had no idea who they were or what they were. They just wanted our turf, and they were going to take it.

On page 2, we cut to a site so close by that the sound of the cop's execution was audible to the players. We were quickly introduced to four Marines who were members of the M.A.R.S. (Marine Attack Rescue Service) Patrol: Sgt. Joe Striker, an African-American; Sgt. Ken Hiro, an Asian-American; and Corp. Russ Stacey and Lt. Cy Adams,

both non minorities. Adams, their commander, told nearby Army guards that they were on a three-day pass. Their green berets were meant to suggest to us another elite fighting force in Vietnam at the time, and one of the guards snapped, "Each of these characters is a specialist in some kind of military mayhem...combat pilot, tank expert, demolition… what's yours, Tojo?"

"Judo and karate!" replied a grinning Sgt. Hiro. "If honorable M.P. care for demonstration, I will gladly fracture bridgework!" Adams told Hiro to cut the "Mr. Moto routine" seconds before another burst of gunfire caught their attention. The two MPs took their jeep to the invasion site, saw what was happening, and had enough time to begin a call to their base before they were captured by the purple-clad men. The M.A.R.S. Patrollers watched from a hiding place, grabbed the jeep, and soon were engaged in a running battle with the enemy, who were already slaughtering civilians.

A call to Adams' superior, General Kripps, confirmed that other enemy landings had been made all over the East Coast. "They're hitting us everywhere!" confirmed Kripps. "And they take no prisoners...it's total war!" All of this was punched up by scenes of the invaders gassing or shooting down civilians and military men. In those days, when the possibility of a Russian-led Armageddon was our worst-case nightmare, it all seemed very, very possible. As a kid reading it in the Sixties, that was my thought: it really could happen.

Luckily, the men of M.A.R.S. Patrol were up to the challenge. They fought their way through an America pock-marked by bullet holes, freezing an invader outfit to death with bursts of liquid oxygen, enduring bomb-bursts, and making their way to command headquarters. There they learned from the President himself that Moscow was also under attack. Thus, the enemy was an undefined and deadly third force. Adams and his men donned color-coded uniforms (yellow for Adams, blue for Stacey, green for Hiro, and red for Striker), split up, and led separate resistance teams against the invaders on the sea, in the air, and on land. The book abounded with excellently-drawn war scenes, and climaxed with a chilling sight of the purple men parachuting into New York, taking over TV broadcasts, and causing people to flee in terror through city streets.

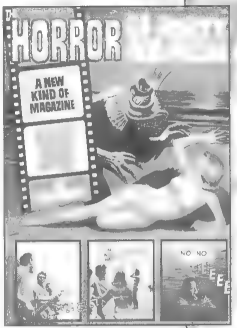
But the good guys were fighting back, smashing into Radio City with grenades and gunfire, flame-throwers and bazookas, finally beating back the enemy. When the last of the invaders were cornered in an office, they killed their wounded and blew themselves up with a grenade, refusing surrender. For the purple men, too, it was Total War.

The American heroes drove past a beachhead that was New York City, complete with flaming tanks and rubble—and bodies. They saw the enemy troop transports withdraw into the fog, headed out to sea. For now, the good guys were victorious. But, as Adams admitted, the price was high: "Thousands of dead and wounded, bridges and tunnels destroyed! Untold billions lost in industrial damage..." On top of that, not one invader had been taken alive.

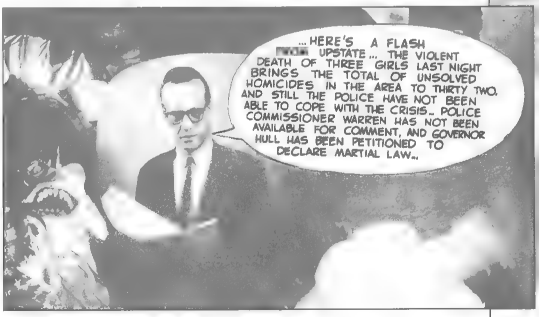
And as a last-page capper, General Kripps took a phone call in the presence of the M.A.R.S. Patrol, and learned of another invasion. "Gentlemen, the invaders have struck again! We're going into action...moving out before nightfall!" A closing caption read:

The M.A.R.S. combat team has only begun to fight! Watch for the next issue of Total War! *Follow this gallant Marine squad as they slug it out, toe to toe with a ruthless enemy, battling for the greatest prize of all... America!*

Wood went on to do the next two issues, with the third being retitled M.A.R.S. Patrol. The stories confirmed that the enemy was invading all of Earth, from Calcutta to Hong Kong, and they were all nicely done, two to an issue. But they couldn't match the breakthrough intensity of the first issue, and Wood wisely withdrew after issue #3. *M.A.R.S. Patrol* continued (under the direction of others) through issue #10, in 1969. It was the greatest war the U.S. never fought. And we can all be thankful that, despite the fact the enemy came from outer space, their military technology was



Horror Of Party Beach nn (#1, Warren, 1964). Story adaptation/art direction by Wallace Wood & Russ Jones.


...HERE'S A FLASH FROM UPSTATE... THE VIOLENT DEATH OF THREE GIRLS LAST NIGHT BRINGS THE TOTAL OF UNSOLVED HOMICIDES IN THE AREA TO THIRTY TWO AND STILL THE POLICE HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO COPE WITH THE CRISIS... POLICE COMMISSIONER WARREN HAS NOT BEEN AVAILABLE FOR COMMENT, AND GOVERNOR HULL HAS BEEN PETITIONED TO DECLARE MARTIAL LAW...

Wally masquerading as a television news reporter? Many collectors think he does in Horror of Party Beach (page 43).

never that much greater than our own. Wood's Gold Key achievements also included, with Dan Adkins, the adaptation of *Fantastic Voyage* (February 1967). This was a well-drawn book-length adaptation of the famed science fiction movie in which a sub full of scientists, surgeons, and one secret agent are shrunk to microscopic size and injected into a man's bloodstream to perform brain surgery from the inside. Though the special effects in the comic aren't and can't be as awesome as those in the movie, Wally and Dan do a good job on this. The characters, however, don't look much like the actors, so the male lead is made into one of Wally's Dynamo-types, the villain is a bald double for Lex Luthor, and the heroine, while very pretty, doesn't look that much like Raquel Welch. (NOTE: The two issues of *Fantastic Voyage* that came out in 1969 adapted the then-current cartoon show and were not by Wood, but the identical title sometimes confuses collectors.)

Wood-Work at Harvey

When Harvey Comics began their short-lived return to adventure comics in 1965-67, Wood was there as a contributor. *Thrill-O-Rama* #2 (September 1966) contained a two-page intro of Clawfang, the Barbarian that was expanded into a larger story in *Unearthly Spectaculars* #2 the next year. The art was by Al Williamson, but the script was by Wood. Clawfang himself was a Conan-type with a wolf's head for a cowl and a ready sword-arm. The story shifted from sword and sorcery to science fiction, beginning with a futuristic super-scientific society degenerating into barbarism, continuing with Clawfang's battle against the legions of the lovely Princess Felina, and concluding with Clawfang's rescue of himself and Felina from the machinations of an evil scientist.

Unearthly Spectaculars #2 also contained two script-and-art jobs by Wood. The first was a humorous super-hero strip entitled Miracles, Inc. It concerned the efforts of a new wizard to gain admission to the Miracles group. He proved his worth by stymieing the efforts of members Thermo, Misfit, Klank, Reflex, and company to subdue him, only to be severely whomped by the powerless and aged… but feisty Professor Who.

The second, one of Wally's best jobs in terms of writing and art, was Earthman. The title hero was an amnesiac space traveler who wound up in a barbaric world of lesser gravity than Terra and became the super-powerful leader of a tribe of lizard-men, facing the threat of the tyrant Noxus. Miracles, Inc. was continued in the last issue of Unearthly Spectaculars under other hands, and Earthman never got a follow-up try, but it deserved one.

Harvey's revived war comic, *Warfront*, contained very effective Wood and Adkins work in issues #37-39 (September 1966 to February 1967). Even though the cover hero was Dynamite Joe by Jack Sparling and Bill Draut, the real attraction was Wood's backup strips. Issue #37 contains 18 pages of art by Wally and Dan and is a true obscure delight for the Wood fanatic. After their intro page and a short Sparling Dynamite Joe story, Adkins and Wood commence with a 2-page "True Warfront Feature" that tells the story of the V-3. This was the Nazis' attempt at a follow-up to their V-2 rockets, with the construction taking place underneath a mountain. The Allies finally get the notion of dropping a ten-ton bomb from a powerful aircraft. The bomb smashes through 90 feet of mountain, punches through 20 feet of concrete, and pokes its nose through the ceiling of the Germans' underground factory for an explosive wake-up call.

The Lone Tiger was their follow-up. This ten-pager, set in China during 1942, introduced Ed Hill, a Flying Tiger who was shot down during a mission. Hill is rescued by a costumed, masked Chinese mastermind called Wu Fang (whose name was taken from a pulp villain). Wu explains that he is caught between the Japanese invaders and a warlord who is siding with the Communists. Hill reluctantly becomes Wu Fang's one-man air force for a time, before realizing his host's evil ambitions and turning on him. The Lone Tiger organizes a guerrilla band of his own, deposes Wu Fang, bombs the Commies, and takes out a few Zeroes for good measure. Wu Fang is still around, though, and Hill admits that they will probably cross swords in the future. His next two stories pitted him against a villainess named The Dragon, but Wally didn't do 'em.

The last story in *Warfront* #37 cast Wally himself as "Dollar Bill Cash", a test pilot who got sick of risking his neck in untrustworthy craft and decided on a more lucrative career as a mercenary. There was a war on in the South American country of Puerto La Guano (yeah, we know what it means), and Bill signed up with one side and his best friend, Al Williams signed up with the other. One of their employers was a Commie and the other was a dictator. Both had a spectacular air battle and Bill won. Al was taken prisoner and sent before a firing squad. Bill landed, shot the firing squad to death, and rescued Al. When Al expressed gratitude to his friend, Bill responded, "Shut up, you punk! This is costing me dough!"

All of this, mind you, was being done while Wally held down a full-time gig as artist and writer for Tower's *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*.

Warfront #38 and 39 both featured two-page true-war stories by Adkins and Wood which are, truthfully, the only reason why anybody should pick up those issues. And that concludes Wally's contributions for Harvey Comics.

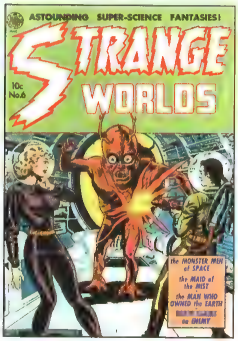
(continued on page 45)

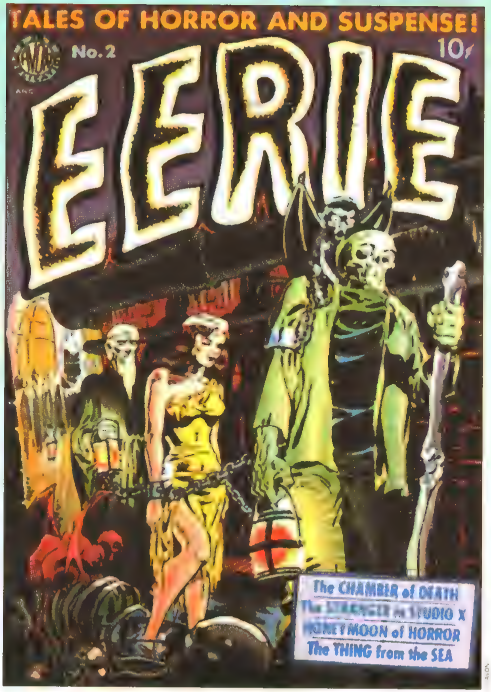
WALLY WOOD
Cover Gallery

The early issues of Avon's Strange Worlds feature some of the best pre-Code science fiction available, and Strange Worlds #4 (Aug 1951, at right) is the first of three consecutive "killer" Wally Wood covers. Strange Worlds was also one of the first sci fi titles from competing publishers (including DC, Atlas, and Ziff-Davis) to follow the lead of EC's highly regarded sisters... Weird Science and Weird Fantasy.

© AVON

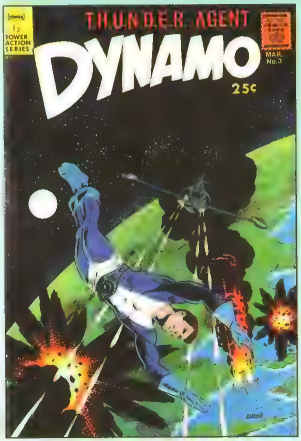
Tower Comics blasted onto the 1960's superhero scene with Thunder Agents #1 (Nov 1965). Tower books featuring Wood's high-impact art are now gaining momentum among Silver Age collectors.





Things look grim for the curvaceous victim on Wood's creepy cover of Eerie #2 (Aug/Sep 1951). Eerie was Avon's longest-running horror title.

The classic elements of Space-man, space-woman, space-ship, and the obligatory space-monster... are all artfully arranged by Wood on the superb and highly collectible cover of Strange Worlds #6 (Feb 1952)

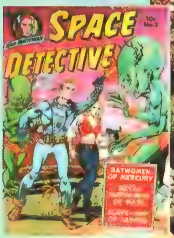


Dynamo #3 (Mar 1967) was the star of Tower's Thunder Agents and received his own title for four issues before the steam ran out of the superhero bandwagon. Wally Wood did all four covers, but the third is usually heralded as the best.

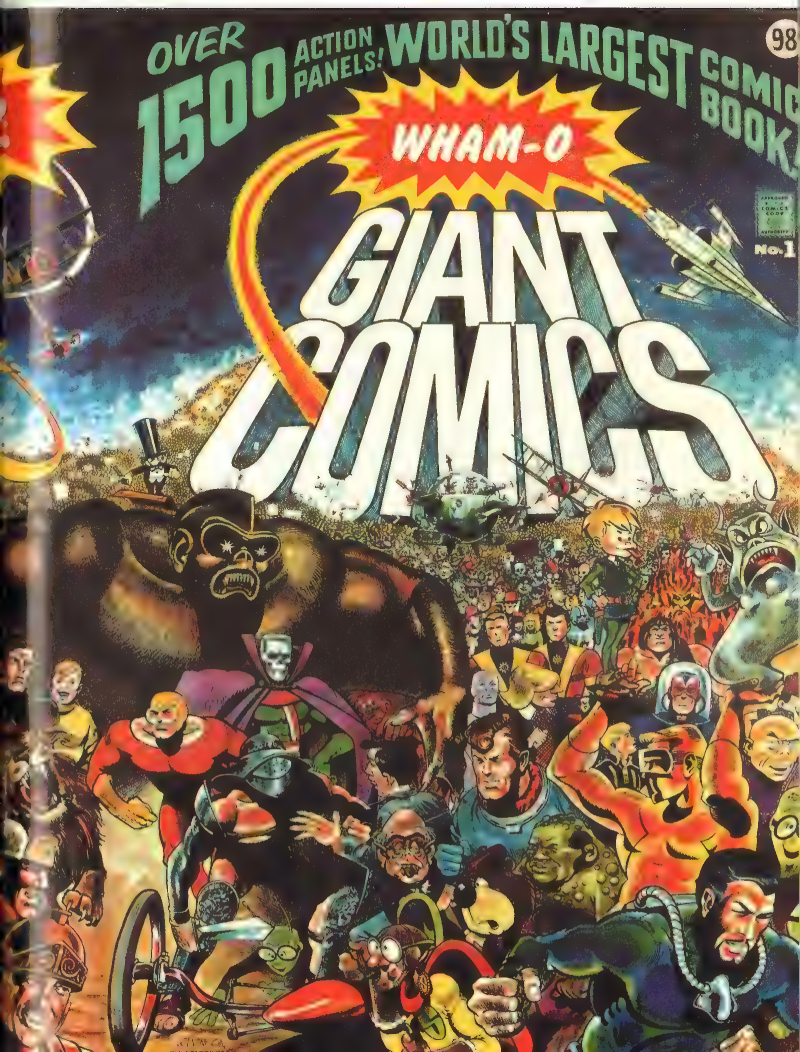
© 1997 MCG

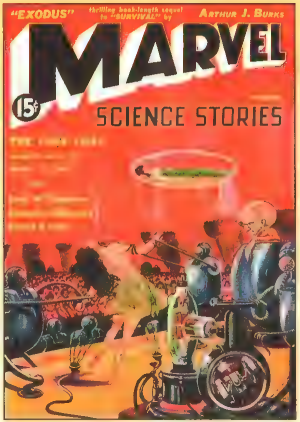
Not well known to most collectors, Pedro #1 (Jun 1950) is an obscure Wally Wood collectible. He penciled the cover for this two-issue offbeat humor title published by Fox Features Syndicate.

The man without fear fights the longest-legged villain of all time on the cover of Daredevil #8 (Jun 1965). Wood's art makes issues #5–11 among the most collectible of the run.

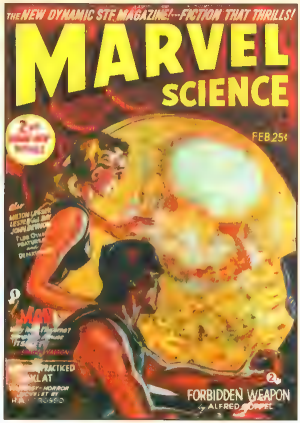


Classic covers by Wally Wood: Dark Mysteries #1, Space Detective #2, Strange Worlds #5, and the fandom famous Wham-O Giant Comics published in the late sixties. Because of its size (21 1/2" high by 14" wide, the largest comic book ever published) it is rarely pictured.


OVER
1500
ACTION PANELS!
WORLD'S LARGEST COMIC BOOK!
WHAM-O
GIANT COMICS
No.1



Clockwise from upper left: MSS v1 #1 (Aug 1938, cover by Norman Saunders), the first Timely Publication?; MSS v1 #2 (Nov 1938, cover by Frank R. Paul); Marvel Stories v2 #2 (Nov 1940, cover by J. W. Scott), which contains the highly collectible one-page Human Torch story; MSS v1 #5 (Aug 1939, cover by J. W. Scott).



Clockwise from upper left: MSS v1 #3 (Feb 1939, cover by Wesso); MSS v1 #4 (Apr/May 1939, cover by Norman Saunders); MSS v3 #2 (Feb 1951); MSS v3 #1 (Nov 1950).

J. David Spurlock and Vanguard Comics Presents the return of Wally Wood's silver age hero, Radian! The star of the 1967 Wham-o Giant comic will have his own mini series starting with Wood's origin in state of the art computer color. The series will continue with the sultry guest Villain, The Iron Maiden!

Vanguard is also producing a great series focusing on Wally Wood's entire career, The Complete Collection features Williamson, Frazetta, Adkins, Steranko, Spurlock and many more! Place your advance order for the first issue by sending $2.95 + $1.00 s/h to:

Vanguard Productions
170 Wildwood Ave.
Up. Montclair, NJ 07043
201-744-1135

Wood-Work at Wham-O *(continued from page 36)*

When the Wham-O Company, those mavens of the Frisbee, the Superball, and the Water Wiggle, decided in 1967 to get into the comics business, they did it in a big way. A really big way. Their one-and-only issue of *Wham-O Giant Comics* measured a storage-staggering 21 x 14 inches and makes the average tabloid look like a shrimp. It cost 98¢, which was a lot more money than the average kid could pony up for a comic back then, so it's not surprising that it only ran for one issue. Also, it was only sold through toy and department stores, not on the newsstand. If you have a copy, undoubtedly your greatest wonder is where to put the thing. Your second greatest wonder is, since no plastic bag known to Man has been built for such a monster, how to keep it from crumbling to pieces in your hands. I had to cut a piece of cardboard for a backing and wrap the whole thing up in Saran Wrap. But Wally was in this one too, with two separate strips. He had the lead story, with a superhero feature called Radian.

Wood basically cloned Dynamo for *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents*, gave him a new costume of red and gold chainmail with a green visor to top it off, gave the Iron Maiden a sex change to transform her into a masked male villain in armor (the Steel Skull), and propelled them through the equivalent of a twelve-page story. Radian entered the story by smashing his way through a locked door, shedding the bullets of an attacking gang as if they were popcorn kernels, and clobbering the baddies in a three-panel waltz. Nothing less could be expected of any Wally Wood hero in his debut.

The Steel Skull suddenly appeared, in a three-dimensional hologram which Radian inadvertently jumped through. The Skull, from afar, related to Radian that he knew of the hero's origin: once, he was only a low-grade technician named Gilman Graves, working at the Pine Ridge nuclear plant. Then one of those comic book radiation accidents occurred (for comic readers, *The China Syndrome* was nothing new), and Graves, the sole survivor, was saved by Barbara Scott, "the world's foremost woman physicist" and a real looker. "I've had a theory for some time that organic life could survive atomic transmutation," she confided. "The only chance Gil has is to go all the way..."

Oh?

"...And I propose to change his whole atomic structure...massive bombardment of positrons!"

Oh.

Gil, stripped to his shorts, was taken to a cyclotron and given the positron priming. Afterwards, he was fully-recovered, and crumpled metal in his bare hands ("I'm stronger! I'm stronger than anybody!"). He leaped through the roof of the installation, sank up to his thighs in the ground when he came down (heavier molecular density–like Dynamo), lifted a house (we weren't shown whose house) and punched a hole in a safe (why he would do such a thing was not explained, and he probably had to pay for it afterwards). "Gil, if you're through showing off, I'd like to have a talk," said Barbara.

The lady savant confided that Gil, like Captain Atom, was giving off some low-level radiation and would have to wear a light metal suit "to shield anyone who is in contact with you for prolonged periods of time..." "Like you...? I hope!" said Gil, grasping her by the shoulders. "Gil, be serious!" snapped Barbara, in exasperation. She then explained that Gil's "delicate atomic structure" might be messed up by certain forms of radiation. Then we got back to the present, 'cause it was time for a big battle scene.

Radian finished terrorizing the Skull's gang, and let one go to trail him to the Skull's hideout. The dastardly lout had already kidnapped Barbara Scott, and set a horde of robots on leave from Dynamo onto our hero. The nuclear knight battled them, reduced them to scrap, and got laid low by a radiation treatment from one of the Skull's defensive devices. He managed to put it together again, rescued Barbara, and brought down the Steel Skull's escape helicopter by jumping through it with a resounding BOOM! The Steel Skull, saved and unmasked, proved to be Reese, a renegade scientist at the nuclear plant who had masterminded the "accident" there. "Something tells me you will have a long time to contemplate the irony of it...behind bars!" pronounced our hero in the last panel.

The art was very good, as per usual. But, as you may have guessed, Wally didn't put a lot of effort into the story, plugging in a Dynamo-figure into a stock hero origin for a quickie package for a publisher. One wonders if Woody would have continued the feature if *Wham-O* had survived its first issue or, as was the case with so many of his other projects, he would have been satisfied with just starting it and then handing it over to other people.

Actually, Wood's second *Wham-O* effort, Goody Bumpkin, came off in a better light than Radian. Wally was a pretty funny writer when he tried to be, and Goody Bumpkin showed off his low-key, whimsical humor to a fine degree.

Goody himself was a blonde, tousle-headed kid dressed in a Robin Hoodish outfit, living in the mythical, medieval land of Euphoria with his friends, the monstrous Whatnot, the admiring girl sidekick Moppet, a Mynah bird of cynical temperament, and the usual shortish fruitcakes from Wood's central casting. Whatnot, a huge, furry misfit in a diaper, was all out of sorts because his mother had been turned into a frog by the evil wizard, Rufus Rottenbad. Goody led his company on a crusade against the nasty necromancer, who wore a top hat and tux and looked like the Monopoly tycoon gone bad. In the end, Whatnot's mama was restored to her Brobdinagian bulk, Rottenbad was put to work washing dishes in Mrs. Whatnot's kitchen, and Goody and Moppet perched on the arm of the Whatnots' gigantic chair and congratulated themselves on a job well done. There's more to it than that, but if you want the whole story, you'll just have to hunt up a copy of *Wham-O*.

Thrill-O-Rama #2 (Sep 1966) featuring the Clawfang 2-pager.

Wood-Work... all over the place

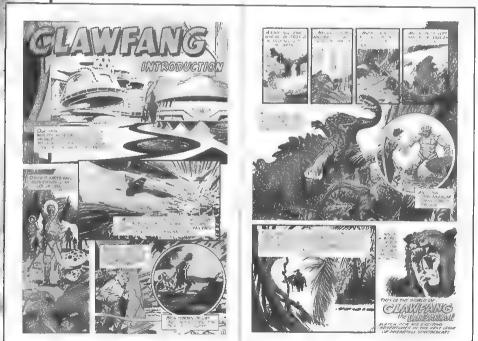
That covers most of Wally's mid-'60s comics work save for Tower, Warren, and Marvel. From 1968 on he was employed mainly as an inker at DC, though he occasionally turned out the odd pencil-and-ink job (in *Captain Action* #1, *Weird Mystery Tales* #23, and *All-Star Comics* #64, 65 among others). He also did the long-running strips Sally Forth and Cannon for Army newspapers, turned out a small series of Sword and Sorcery shorts for Marvel's fantasy mags in the early 1970s, and put together much more impressive Sword and Sorcery work for Warren's *Creepy*, *Eerie*, and *Vampirella* at that time. He did a lot of other work, too, ranging from pornography to commercials to *Witzend*... far too much to address here.

Two other sources of Wood material should be brought to the Woodites' attention, if they don't already know about them. In the mid-'60s, Peter Pan records brought out a series of radio-play adaptations of classic adventure stories for kids on big LP records, including *The Invisible Man*, *Around the World in 80 Days*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *War of the Worlds*, and *The First Man in the Moon*. Wood drew the covers for all of these in comic book style, with word balloons, panels (usually), and gorgeous art. They were reissued in the 1970s, and may still be available in used record stores or through special order. (If you can't find 'em and want to know what they looked like, hunt through the Captain Company ads in some late '60s Warren mags for their jacket photos.)

Another source of Wood art that seems to have passed by everyone but the real cognoscenti is Galaxy magazine. Several comic book artists did illoes for the science fiction digests of the '50s, '60s and '70s, including Gray Morrow and John Giunta. Wally Wood's main hangout was Galaxy, where he spent many years delivering spot illoes to stories edited by the great Fred Pohl. My favorites among all of these are the ones he did for Pohl's serialization of his 1968 *Age of the Pussyfoot*, containing some great female (and male) nudes, some EC-like futurist settings, a traditional clean-cut hero, and an alien built along the lines of Haystacks Calhoun, half as attractive and three times as hairy. The story's nice, too. Most issues of *Galaxy* from the '60s can be counted upon to have at least a little Wood work.

There's another Wood color comic from 1969 which is a bit hard to find, since it was only distributed at military PX's, but it's well worth the search. The one-shot *Heroes, Inc.* sported a dynamic cover of Wally's "men's-sweat" hero Cannon hefting a beautiful blonde over one shoulder while firing an automatic rifle at a couple of Chinese Communists in the foreground, flanked by inset panels featuring Dragonella and the Misfits.

Cannon's origin story, written and inked by Wally and penciled by his frequent partner Steve Ditko, leads off the issue. The title hero is a former spy-plane pilot brainwashed by the Russians into becoming their assassin. The CIA captures him and decides, "Only one thing to do...go all the way!" (Oh?) The "way" is using a special conditioning process to destroy Cannon's emotions, making him a human robot in their hands. (Oh.) Come to think of it, this might not have been the greatest idea to put in a book which was intended for the military. Anyway, the Commies put the snatch on a beautiful blonde female scientist, and Cannon is sent to get her back, which he does with a maximum of action. The girl, her dress half-torn-off, is strapped to a double jet-pack and sent rocketing into the air ("You're mad!"), gets hooked and reeled in by a U.S. plane, and is there to greet Cannon after he blows up the Commie base with an atomic bomb. She's all over him like a good Wood heroine, but Cannon firmly brushes her aside: "Excuse me...must make my report..." Clearly, going all the way has another connotation in Cannon's world.



Wood's exceptional 2-page spread from Thrill-O-Rama #2.

The next story, The Misfits, is credited to Wood and Ralph Reese, and puts together a beautiful brunette telepath named Mysta, a ferret-like blue alien named Shag, and a Thing-style brute dubbed Glomb against an alien invader who looks like a bleached NoMan. It's ten pages, and trust me... it's better than it sounds.

Finishing out Heroes, Inc. is Dragonella, a funny fairy tale drawn by Wood and written by Wally and Ron Whyte, concerning a bounteous blonde princess in an enchanted forest, talking horses and lizard-men, Prince Hal (for Halitosis), and the evil wizard Freeb. If you've read Wally's funny stuff, like Sally Forth, you can probably work out the story line for yourself. And the wicked queen in panel one proves he could draw a woman that looked like Raquel Welch.

All of this work was in addition to his regular gigs doing *MAD*, and *Daredevil*, and *Dynamo*, and *Superboy*, and *Captain Action*, and all the other stuff that he was more well-known for, thirty-odd years ago.

Let's face it. In the '60s, there was Wood all over the place. ■

Second Time Around... Wally Wood

Second Time Around is a CBM feature that spotlights great bargains in comic book reprints! —By Shawn Hamilton

WHEN I LOOK BACK ON THE BODY OF WORK THAT THE LATE GREAT Wally Wood left behind for us, I am truly amazed! Never have I seen any artist go through such a transformation. With much of his work bringing premium prices, wouldn't it be great to be able to see some of it... without spending a fortune to do so? Have no fear CBM readers, because I have some suggestions.

Wood's talent as a powerful and dynamic inker came to light, teamed with the pencils of Jack Kirby, Wally Wood would create masterpieces in Sky Masters and *Challengers Of The Unknown*.Wood developed an incredibly sublime style, mastering the use of blacks, and creating a simple look of clean lines and smooth textures that at the same time was not minimalistic. For this edition of 2nd Time Around, I have compiled a list of Wally Wood reprints that highlight the many phases of his career. Although I would recommend picking up any reprint that you might come across, the following list will serve as an introduction to the talent of Wally Wood!

1950

Flying Saucers #1 (Avon one-shot) 1. "The Flying Saucers Spawn of Terror" 7 pgs.; 2. "First Contact" 7 pgs.; 3. "Final Objective" 7 pgs. Reprinted: *World of Wood* #5, Eclipse/Theakston, Feb 1989, b+w)

1951

Captain Science #4 (Youth Magazines, Jun 1951) 1. "Captain Science and the Insidious Doctor Khartoum" Wood/Orlando 8 pgs. b+w.
Reprinted: *Buried Treasure* Vol. 2 #2 (Caliber Press/Pure Imagination, May 1990)

Captain Science #5 (Youthful Magazines, Aug 1951) 1. "Time Door of Throrn" Wood/Orlando 8 pgs. b+w., Reprinted: *Doc Weird's Thrill Book* #3 (Pure Imagination, 1988)

Dark Mysteries #1 (Master-Merit Pub., Jun/Jul 1951) 1. "The Curse of the Sea Witch" 8 pgs. b+w. Reprinted: *Buried Treasure* #3 (Caliber Press/Pure Imagination, Aug 1990)

Forbidden Worlds #3 (American Comics Group, Nov/Dec 1951) 1. "Skull of the Sorcerer" Williamson/Wood/Orlando 7 pgs. b+w
Reprinted: *World of Wood* #5 (Eclipse/Theakston, Feb 1989)

Space Detective #1 (Avon, Jul/Aug 1951) 1. "Opium Smugglers of Venus" 8 pgs. b+w. Reprinted: *Doc Weird's Thrill Book* #3 (Pure Imagination, 1988)

1952

Strange Worlds #2 (Avon, 1952) 1. Kenton of the Star Patrol in "Sirens of Space", 8 pgs. b+w. Reprinted: *Betty Page's* #2 (Digest, Pure Imagination, 1988)

1958-59

Skymasters of the Space Force (Syndicated Comic Strip) 9/8/58 - 5/8/59 Dailies; 2/8/59 - 3/28/59 Sundays. Reprinted: *Skymasters of the Space Force* Book 1, Pure Imagination, 1991, b+w and color

Challengers of the Unknown #4, (DC, Oct/Nov 1958)
1. "The Wizard of Time", Kirby/Wood, 25 pgs.

Challengers of the Unknown #6, (DC, Feb/Mar 1959)
1. "Captives of the Space Circus", Kirby/Wood, 25 pgs.

Challengers of the Unknown #8, (DC, Jun/Jul 1959) 1. "The Man Who Stole the Future", Kirby/Wood, 12 pgs.

(All three Challengers stories listed above are reprinted in: *Super DC Giant* #S-25 (DC, Jul/Aug 1971)

1965-66

Thunder Agents #1 (Tower Comics, Nov 1965) 1. Thunder Agents "Introduction, First Encounter", 4 pgs.; 2. Dynamo "Menace of the Iron Fog", 12 pgs.; Reprinted: Hall of Fame featuring *The Thunder Agents* #1 (John C. Productions, May 1983); 3. Dynamo "At the Mercy of the Iron Maiden", Wood/Adkins, 10 pgs. Reprinted: Hall of Fame featuring *The Thunder Agents* #2 (John C. Productions, Aug 1993)

Blazing Combat #3 (Warren Pub. Co., Apr 1966) 1. "Battle of Britain", 7 pgs. b+w. Reprinted: *Blazing Combat: World War I and World War II* (Apple Press, Mar 1994).

1970-71

Astonishing Tales #1 (Marvel, Aug/Sep 1970) 1. Dr. Doom "Unto you is born...The Doomsman", 10 pgs.

Astonishing Tales #2 (Marvel, Oct/Nov 1970) 1. Dr. Doom "Revolution", 9 pgs.

Astonishing Tales #3 (Marvel, Dec/Jan 1971) 1. Dr. Doom "Doom Must Die", 11 pgs.

Tower of Shadows #5 (Marvel, May 1970) 1. "Flight Into Fear", 7 pgs.

Tower of Shadows #7 (Marvel, Sep 1970) 1. "Of Swords and Sorcery", 7 pgs.

Tower of Shadows #8 (Marvel, Nov 1970) 1. "Sanctuary", 7 pgs.

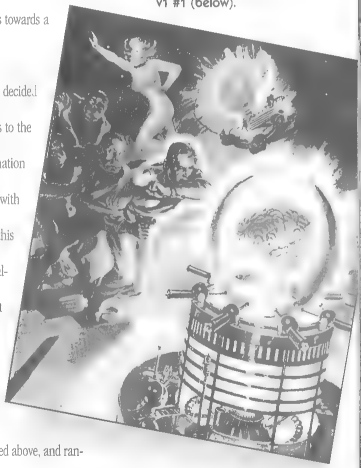
(All of the Marvel stories listed from 1970-1971 are Reprinted: *The Marvel Comics Art of Wally Wood* (Thumbtack Books, 1981, color).

Well, that does it for this installment of Second Time Around. What! No EC reprints? No *MAD Magazine*? No '60's or '70's DC? Don't worry! This column will be covering those areas soon! So till next time, "Keep searching those sale boxes." Special thanks to Jonn Allen and Greg Theakston. References: *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide* 1996; *The Wally Wood Treasury.* ■

MĀR

VELOUS PULPS!

I never knew that Martin Goodman published pulp magazines at all until 1993, when I purchased the oversized coffee table book *Marvel: Fifty Years of the World's Greatest Comics*. Imagine my surprise, after nearly twenty years of comic collecting, to discover that not only was Goodman in business before November 1939, but he had a pulp actually called *Marvel Tales! Marvel, Fifty Years*... has a full page photograph of *Marvel Science Stories* #3, with a very colorful painting of a series of spaceships shooting fiery blasts towards a flaming New York City.



Closeups of the cover graphics from Marvel Stories v2 #2 (left) and Marvel Science Stories v1 #1 (below).

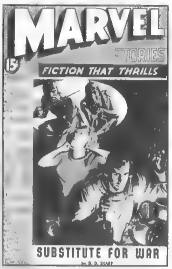
After seeing this picture and reading the bit of text about Marvel's early pulp days, I decided I had to know more about these mysterious magazines and their striking similarities to the *Marvel Mystery* series that would start the next year. So I looked and looked for information about this period; I read books about Marvel, I asked comic dealers, and I discussed it with fellow collectors. Mostly, my efforts were fruitless. Most dealers were either not aware of this title or had some vague sense that the pulps were very difficult to locate. One comic dealer (who also sells a lot of pulps) knew about these early Marvel magazines and said that at least one of the Marvel pulps had a mini-comic inside of it!

With this to go on, I've spent the last three years looking for these pulps and compiling information about them. Be aware that the data I have gathered is based solely on the pulps that I own, information I've gathered in the Marvel book mentioned above, and random discussions with dealers at conventions. I have made some assumptions based on what I have learned, but that doesn't mean I've nailed down all there is to know. (I encourage anyone with information to step forward and share it with all of us via the pages of *CBM*.)

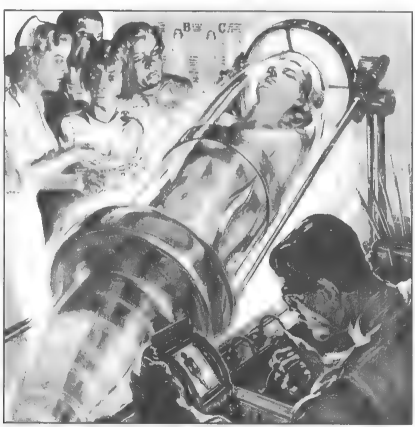
BY CHRIS MALINS

Marvel, or Red Circle, as it was known in those days, published many different pulps from 1934 to the early 1940s. Westerns, detective, horror, science fiction, and jungle adventure (Ka-zar was originally a pulp character) were some of the genres that Red Circle covered in the pre-comic book days. The focus of this article is on the pulp that chose as its title the name that would come to be synonymous with comic books, Marvel.

The original title of the Marvel pulp was *Marvel Science Stories* and its first issue was on the newsstands in the summer of 1938. As far as I can tell, this is the first time that the word "Marvel" was used by Martin Goodman. It was published bi-monthly and, characteristic of pulps, had both a volume and an issue number. For the first five issues (volume 1, #1… to volume 1, #5), it was called *Marvel Science Stories* and published second rate science fiction (although some excellent science fiction authors did see print in this pulp, most notably Jack Williamson). With a name change in 1939, also came a change of format. *Marvel Tales*, as it was now known, ran for a year (volume 1 #6… to volume 2 #1) and the stories from this period can best be described as "spicy horror", which meant violent horror stories (combined with frequent references to womens breasts). The final two issues were titled *Marvel Stories* and marked the return to science fiction. The final issue of the original series came out in early 1941 (Marvel revived the pulp briefly in 1950 with the original title for four issues).



The cover of the fourth issue of Marvel Science Stories (below) features technology and pathos that would be the envy of any medical soap opera… including a gravely ill patient, concerned relatives, a dedicated doctor, a diligent nurse, and a miraculous cure.



The frequent name and format changes of the pulp are typical of the Goodman approach to publishing that continued into the 1950s; when the reading public demands something different…listen, act, and supply! When I look at the mutations that this Marvel pulp went through in its two and a half year life, I am reminded of the Marvel comic title *Venus* that went from Torchy-esque cheesecake to love stories to science fiction to horror in the space of four years and eighteen issues (see *CBM* #39). When the wind changed direction, you could bet that Goodman would be there.

It is interesting to examine the cover layout of the pulp and compare it to the design on the *Marvel Mystery* covers. The word "Marvel" is identical on the pulp to the way it was in *Marvel Mystery Comics* from issue #3 onward, with the big "M" on the left and the remaining letters spilling out dramatically to the right. Additionally, the "feel" of the early *Marvel Mystery* covers, until issue #8–is definitely pulpish. Women in bondage, strange exotic villains, pseudo-supernatural themes, all of these ideas came directly from the pulps. It seems that Goodman was beginning to take small steps into the new world of comic books at this time, but was unwilling to totally give up what had been so successful for him… pulps and pulp themes.

The actual artists on the Marvel pulps (the cover artists as well as those who penciled the "headers" for the stories) are some of the most well-known from the Golden Age. Alex Schomburg, Simon & Kirby, and Frank R. Paul are just a few of the artists who worked in both mediums. As most hard-core Marvelites know, Frank R. Paul was the man who drew the cover for the legendary *Marvel Comics* #1. However, what a lot of people don't know is that he was in the twilight of his career at this time, having previously worked for many years in the pulps, creating memorable cover scenes for *Amazing Stories*, *Marvel Science Stories*, and many other pulps of the 1920s and 1930s.

The most fascinating thing that I discovered while researching these pulps is a house ad for *Marvel Comics* in the November 1940 issue of *Marvel Stories*. This is from the brief period November 1939 to late 1940 when Goodman was publishing comic books and pulps at the same time. The ad is a full page of comics, and features the Human Torch investigating a disturbance in the "5th Column". After deciding that the Sub-Mariner can't be behind it, the Torch is able to control the crowd by giving the people (of all things!) *Marvel Comics*.

How scarce are these pulps? I have no real way to tell, I just know that they were difficult for me to find. I have no data on the distribution of them and can only assume that the number of pulps and comics to survive the WWII paper drives is comparable; less than 1%. Pulps are also notoriously difficult to find in grade. Browning pages are almost a given and the covers are

prone to tearing. These books weren't named after the lowest quality paper available for nothing! One of the really great things about these pulps is their relative affordability compared to comic books of similar vintage. There is no price guide for pulps and most dealers price them in a very general way according to time period, author, and genre. The four Marvel pulps that I've been able to obtain cost me no more than $90 per issue. Not bad for a Marvel item almost sixty years old!

The time, effort, and perseverance I have logged tracking down these pulps and learning more about Martin Goodman's early publishing history has paid rich dividends for me not only in my understanding of how Marvel came to be Marvel, but also in being able to better follow the rapid shift of public tastes from pulps to comics in the early 1940s.

But after all is said and done, the adventure of discovery (as *CBM* readers know) is simply Marvelous! ■

MARVEL COMICS Presents
A short-short picture story featuring the HUMAN TORCH
THINGS HAVE BEEN PRETTY QUIET. DO YOU THINK, CAPTAIN, THAT SUB-MARINER WILL KEEP HIS PROMISE AND NOT DISTURB THE PEACE AGAIN?
I BELIEVE SO, TORCH. SUB-MARINER IS A MAN OF HIS WORD. I'M SURE HE WONT CAUSE ANY MORE TROUBLE.
TORCH, DON'T THINK FOR A MOMENT THAT OUR JOB IS COMPLETE. YOU UNDERSTAND THAT WE HAVE TO BE ON THE ALERT FOR 5TH COLUMN DISTURBANCES.
CAPTAIN, I HAVE A HUNCH THAT WE CAN DISSOLVE THESE TRAITOR ORGANIZATIONS IF WE ALL PULL TOGETHER.
YOU'RE RIGHT, TORCH. BUT WE MUST BE DOUBLY CAREFUL! YOU KNOW THESE RATS ARE PRETTY GOOD ACTORS AND COVER UP THEIR ACTIVITIES BY SMILES AND A PAT ON THE BACK WITH ONE HAND---
---AND A GUN AND POISON IN THE OTHER!
LET'S INVESTIGATE THESE NEIGHBORHOOD CLUB ROOMS AND GET THE LEADERS' NAMES AND HISTORIES!
O.K., TORCH. YOU AND JERRY COVER THE PRECINCT TERRITORY!
WAIT! THERE'S THE RAID SIGNAL COMING FROM CAR 27. LET'S JOIN THEM IN THE RIOT CAR!
RIGHT! AND WE'D BETTER GET THERE FAST! THAT CALL IS FROM THE PRECINCT TERRITORY!
AS THE TORCH AND THE CAPTAIN REACH CAR 27 THEY ARE MET BY AN AMUSING SCENE.
GIVE ME A COPY OF MARVEL COMICS!!
YEAH! MARVEL COMICS!
CANDY
ME TOO!
WELL I'LL BE - THAT, CAPTAIN IS ONE OF THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHODS OF PREVENTING FUTURE 5TH COLUMNS AND UNDESIRABLE CITIZENS!
YES, THERE IS PLENTY OF GOOD, CLEAN READING, AND LOADS OF THRILLS IN EVERY ISSUE OF MARVEL COMICS! AND IT COSTS ONLY 10¢ – EVERYWHERE!!
27

Buried inside what looks like just another sci-fi pulp from the early '40s, is a hidden treasure for Timely collectors. Marvel Stories v2 #2 (Nov 1940, cover shown on facing page) contains a one-page Human Torch "story" that is really a house ad for Marvel Comics. This obscure and highly collectible Timely oddity makes reference to 5th columns, undesirable citizens, Marvel comic books, and even Sub-Mariner.

(See color cover gallery on pages 42 and 43.)

ALL COVERS & ART © 1997 MEG

HECK... WALLY WOOD MUST HAVE BEEN AN ALIEN!

By Roger Hill

HOW ELSE CAN YOU EXPLAIN HIS UNIQUE ABILITY TO PERFECTLY DRAW ALL THOSE VISIONS OF OTHER WORLDS!

Somehow, Wally Wood had a special knack of drawing just about anything he put his mind to, and that's one of the reasons that I have spent the past 35 years of my life appreciating and collecting his published and unpublished work. Heck... he must have been an alien... at least I considered the idea when I was a kid. It was the only way kid-logic could explain his picture-perfect renditions of extra-terrestrials, alien

landscapes, and out-of-this-world machinery! In that regard, he was certainly one of the more stylistic and diversified comic artists of his time. He is, by far, my favorite science fiction artist.

Woody was a true artist at heart and a man who, during his 32 years of being a professional artist, illustrated for comic books, hardcovers, paperbacks, pulps, newspaper strips, gum/trading cards, record album jackets, magazines, fanzines, posters, lunch boxes, games, and commercial advertising.

I was only 12 years old when I first discovered this amazing artist's talents in the pages of *MAD Magazine* in 1960. Soon after that I ran across one of the *MAD* paperback books which reprints of some of the early comic book stories. In those days, I didn't even know that *MAD* had ever been a comic book, or that these were reprints. All I knew was that these funny paperback books were loaded

Wood's humorous and kindly interpretation of Dr. Frankenstein and his creation from MAD #38, March 1958.

For some, collecting the works of Wally Wood is more than a hobby... it's a life-long passion!

ART COURTESY THE ROGER HILL COLLECTION

with hysterical stuff, and my friends and I loved reading them over and over. My young neighborhood pals would come over to my house on rainy afternoons and we would read and (in some instances) act out the antics of "Superduper Man" or "Flesh Garden" or even "Batboy and Rubin." Of course this was usually done while my parents were still at work, affording us the opportunity to be as loud and crazy as we wanted to. We also liked the stories drawn by Jack Davis and Will Elder, but the ones signed "Wood" were always my personal favorites. Here was an artist who could draw any type of character... and women that looked like goddesses! But more importantly, Woody had a zany kind of overall style that jumped out at you and grabbed your attention.

Later on I discovered and began to collect all of the EC comic titles from the 1940s through the 1950s, and started to realize just how prolific Wally Wood had been. The first EC comic cover by Woody that I ever saw is the same one that editor Gary Carter most remembers — *Weird Science-Fantasy* #27. Is it any wonder that I immediately became hooked on this artist's work? That cover said it all for me and since that day I have been an avid collector of Wally Wood images. The covers and stories he drew for *Weird Fantasy* and *Weird*

Nobody can draw machinery, space craft, and weapons like Wally Wood. In the last panel of the story "Big Moment" originally published in Incredible Science Fiction #33 (Jan/Feb 1956), Wally does it again!

Science are nothing less than breathtaking and remain some of the most recognized classic images in the history of comics. It has been said many times that the essence or beauty of any particular piece of art, lies in the eye of the beholder. We all have our own individual tastes of what we like. I'm not sure I can exactly put into words all the elements of Wally's work that affects me so deeply, but one of the best things is his ability to draw interesting machinery and detailed gadgets, they always look so real. You just knew these things had to work. It seemed as if everything he drew was believable. Maybe that's the most important element of Woody's work... the believability of it all.

I'll never forget the time that Wally Wood's art caused a car wreck! That's right, this actually happened, and naturally... I was involved in it! I have to laugh now as I think back, but at the time it happened, it was no laughing matter. I think it was some time in early 1963 that I discovered some of Woody's other science-fiction work outside of EC. In these early days of collecting (before the appearance of Bob Overstreet's *Comic Book Price Guide*) very little was annotated about comic artist credits. I had no idea of where to look for more Wally Wood art in the older comics from the 1950's, and there were only two or three comic book dealers around to order from. I had been dealing with Phil Seuling for about a year or so and he knew my special interests at that time were 1950's science-fiction and horror comics. One day I received a postcard from Phil saying that he would sell me a hundred first issues of various science-fiction and horror titles from the 1950's for... 50¢ apiece. That added up to $50, which in those days was a heckuva lot of money for me. But because I had been working a part-time job (and saving my lunch money from school), I was able to send Phil the money. I was hoping that this new purchase would

Collector Roger Hill with his Wally Wood oil painting.

bring in some additional Wally Wood comic books that I hadn't seen before, and needless to say, I was very anxious for the package to arrive.

I don't remember how long it took for that package to get to me, but I do remember that every day I waited was agony. Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, it arrived. My older brother, Don, drove to my workplace one day to pick me up, and he brought with him a large box that had come in the mail that day. He knew I had been waiting for this package to arrive and since he too was a big fan of science-fiction and horror, he was as anxious as I was to get a glimpse of the contents. *CBM* readers know how collectors are... always waiting with baited breath for that next package to show up!

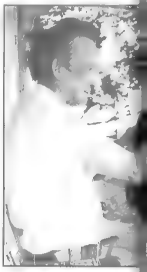
Don had only been driving for about six months, and it would be another two years before I could get my license.

I remember it being a warm, sunny afternoon as we jumped into the family car (an old light blue 1956 Chrysler Imperial) and headed for home. I cut the tape off the box using a pocket knife and shortly thereafter started pulling comics out one by one. Some were in really nice shape, which added to the excitement. Every time I'd pull another comic from the box I'd yell out, "Wow–look at this!!" or "Ooohhh–look at that!!"

We were both getting pretty excited, and if ever there was a time that we should have had our good old "EC drool cups" along, this was it. The stuff was incredible!! Never before had we seen so many wonderful four-color images come out of one box, and just as I'd thought we'd seen the best of it, out came the Avons!!! I'm pulling out *Mask of Dr. Fu Manchu*, *Rocket to the Moon* and *Space Detective* #1, as I'm yelling over to Don, "We got Wally Wood here!" I remember my brother kept looking over at the comics, then back to the road, then over to the comics, then back to the road, and in between looks he's yelling, "That's an incredibly cool one!!!"

We had only been driving for about three miles, doing about 30 miles an hour, when all of a sudden, amidst all this excitement, the car jumps up over the curb and brakes to a halt. Now the fan blade is making this horrible sound and after we shut the engine off and get out, we notice the fan belt hanging down. The only other thing I can remember about that day is that horrible look on my Mom's face when she finally arrived on the scene and realized that the chief cause of the accident had been… that box of four-colored beauties! This look was immediately followed by words that burned into my brain over thirty years ago, and which I still remember..."I might have known...it was those !#&%X+#*! comic books!"

Oh well… nobody got hurt and the car repairs were pretty minor. Before long, things were back to normal again, with me collecting and continuing to buy more comics from Phil Seuling. Today when I look back and think about that little car accident, I chuckle and remember how great it was seeing those incredible Wally Wood images for the first time. Since then, I have searched out everything I could find with Woody's art… the vast body of work he did between 1950 and 1981 is staggering and a testament to his phenomenal creativity. Just when I think I've found everything this artist ever did, I find something new to add to my collection. It's amazing! He was such a prolific artist.



Some say Wally Wood was a workaholic, and it may have been true. From all indications he seems to have spent more hours working at his drawing board than he ever spent at living life itself. I think artist Roy Krenkel summed it up best in his remembrance of Woody published in the 1972 EC Fan Addict Convention program booklet:

"Wally and I worked together and it was a question of who exasperated the other the most. One anecdote immediately comes to mind... not an anecdote but a situation with Wally. You'd be going over to see Wally about noon or one o'clock 'cause you got up late like all the guys. You'd been sleeping seven or eight hours... which wasn't enough. You'd come to Wally's door and you realize Wally had been up all night. You left him about two in the morning and you'd come back about twelve. You ring the bell repeatedly... the door finally, slowly opens and Wally stands there with an absolutely glazed look in his eyes... totally incapable of focusing. A long pregnant silence lasting for about a minute and a half would go by and then without any change of expression would be "eh"...just a little coughing grunt 'eh'. He'd be walking like a mummy and he'd slowly amble in and guzzle some fruit juice and go back to the drawing board. Typical Wood! The guy was totally obsessed with work. Really hung up on hard work and he'd never tire! He'd go on and on and out would come brilliant stuff... amazing!"

Rare unpublished photos of Wally Wood (playing guitar, lower photo) taken on his porch in Derby, CT (circa 1980) by Wood fan and writer, Bill Pearson. Woody is chatting with Kym, who was the inspiration for a Bill's 3-part story written for Witzend.

WHS COURTESY BILL PEARSON AR ZONA

It was at that same EC Fan Addict Convention held at the old Alpine Hotel in New York City in May of 1972 that I met Wally Wood for the only time in my life. What a fun time we all had during that weekend attending the various panel discussions and listening to Bill Gaines and most of the EC artists talk about the good old days at 225 LaFayette Street. It was a great convention, and in my memory, remains the best one I've ever attended.

Many of the EC artists were there and I remember right after the science fiction panel concluded, I started making my way toward Woody, in hopes of talking with him for a few precious

THE EC "ARTIST OF THE ISSUE"

WALLACE WOOD

This rather distinguished (in a youthful way!), extremely modest, diffident, self-effacing, soft-spoken, and retiring master craftsman of the comic technique was born June 17, 1927 in Menahga, Minnesota . . . to a lumber-jack father and a school-teacher mother! With an ancestry of Finnish, Scotch-Irish, and five other nationalities, Wally today stands 5 feet 10 inches high, weighs 145 pounds, has brown hair, blue eyes, and a "Frank Sinatra" build! At one time or another, he has lived in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New York. He has worked as pin-boy, bus-boy, usher, dental lab assistant, printing plant apprentice, factory worker, lumber-jack, stevedore, and truck-loader! During the war, Wally joined the Merchant Marine and sailed to Eniwetok, Ulithi, Guam, the Philippines, South America, and Italy! After leaving the Merchant Marine, he enlisted in the Paratroopers, and was stationed in Japan . . . a member of the 11th Airborne! Upon being discharged, he attended the New York Cartoonists and Illustrators School. Aside from this one short bit of training, most of Wally's art ability comes from innate talent and self-teaching! Wally broke into the comic field by becoming a letterer . . . quickly moving up to assisting established artists. It soon became apparent that Wally was capable of fairing nicely in the field on his own, so he made the fatal plunge! As Wally puts it, "After being exploited by nearly everyone in the business, I finally found my home at good old E.C.!" It was about this time that he met his future wife, Tatjana, while square-dancing in Central Park! He married the lovely gal about a year ago, and today they have a comfortable apartment in Forest Hills, Long Island. Wally's hobbies include travel, home movies. collecting records (espe cially folk-songs), and folk-dancing!

Wally is a fast and prodigious worker, and his art appears regularly in E.C.'s S-F and war mags, as well as occasionally in the others! (After writing this biog, your editors have but one comment *This boy has done a heap of living in 24 short years!*)

minutes. You can't imagine the crowd of people that engulfed this artist. Everybody wanted his autograph... it was a madhouse. I only had time to quickly shake his hand and tell him how much I appreciated his work... and that was it, we were out of the room. A few years later I exchanged a couple of letters with Woody and assisted on his Wally Wood checklist that was eventually published in his *Friends of Odkin fan club newsletters*. Before long... Wally Wood was gone.

In November of 1981, with his health rapidly failing him, Woody put down his brush for one last time, and ended his life. His private tortures, now long forgotten, have been replaced by legendary images that he left behind on paper. Images which many of us continue to study and appreciate and eventually pass on to those who have not yet discovered his genius and talent. There will never be another Wally Wood, but his influence on up-and-coming new artists (both in and out of the comics field) has been seen and recognized for the past 30 years. I'm confident that his published work will continue to attract new followers and fans for many years to come... because of its quality and its unique place in history. ■

LEFT: **Wood bio from Weird Science #12 (Mar/Apr '52).**
BELOW & MARGINS: **Wood's detailed scene featuring King Kong and a Tyranasaurus (MAD #41, Sep '58).**

The author's rendition of Wood's "Radian".

Diary of a Wally Wood Fan

Excerpts from the personal journal of J. David Spurlock

Entry #1 – My interest in classic comic book art has led me to an interesting career. I'm amazed at how it encompasses illustration, publishing, writing… and even teaching comic book art technique and appreciation. Wally Wood is such an icon to me… it is hard to imagine that any comic book fan does not know about his work. It's sad that his contributions are less known today, but, I have found in the classes that I teach that this unfortunate situation exists. Maybe I can help my students understand why Wood is so incredible.

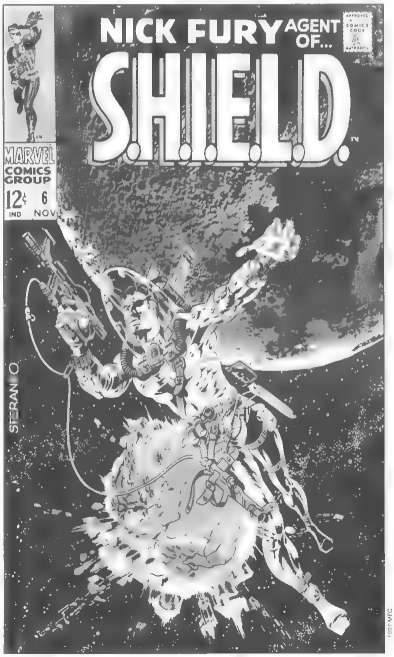
Entry #2 – After much consideration and many discussions with friends and colleagues, I have come to the conclusion that, after Kirby, Wood is the most important American comics artist! This may be a revolutionary thought for some, especially when greats like Toth, Kurtzman, Williamson, Frazetta, Steranko, Eisner, Kubert, Ditko, and others are proposed. Yet the glorious tapestry of Wood's career… from his early romances, to the space operas of *Weird Science*, genius parodies in *MAD*, authentic war stories, pulp digest and girlie magazine illustrations, Mars Attacks and other gum cards, Daredevil, T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents, Superboy, Vampirella, Witzend, Sally Forth, Justice Society of America, etc. is consistently, recognizable, and incredible body of work.

Wood's amazing contribution to the art form covers more genres than most artists, was sustained for a longer period of time than most… is comprised of work that is truer to the comics form than many… and is of a higher level of fan recognition than other contenders. All this is why I place Wallace Wood at the right hand of Kirby.

Entry #3 – Love of Wood's work has led me to acquire his Silver Age creation, Radian. I plan to revive the Thunder Agent-esque strip which premiered in the biggest (physically) comic book of all time… the *Wham-O Giant Comic* (1967). I think I can do justice to both Wally and his creation.

Entry #4 – Ironic contrasts between Wood's professional peaks and personal depths have inspired me to tackle an even more massive project, a comic book sized mini-series called *The Complete Wallace Wood Collection*, chronicling this master's career… to later be collected as a trade paperback. My work on the project (so far) has

Jim Steranko's classic tribute to Wally Wood has been a sought after collectible since its publication.



Line art from the highly collectible Famous Funnies #213... Frazetta's tip-of-the-hat to Wally Wood.

received rave responses from many industry pros. but most importantly, I've had some great personal experiences.

Entry #5 – I've been consulting Jim Steranko by phone for some time, but seldom get a chance to visit with him in person. Steranko and I were able to finally get together and visit his long time friend and one time Wood assistant Dan

"It is unlikely that Wood's contribution to the form will ever be matched."

—Jim Steranko, *Mediascene Preview* 47

Adkins. I picked up Jim Steranko at his home and we were off to Adkins' place.

At Adkins place we went up to the studio. The room is small and similar to the drawing board turned outerspace cockpit in the Adkins/Wood classic "Overworked" from *Creepy* #9 (1966). The studio is wallpapered with great fantasy art reproductions. Steranko and Adkins tell stories about Wood for hours with a camaraderie and rapport similar to childhood chums reminiscing about old schooldays. Adkins retains a wealth of knowledge on who wrote and worked on what, how much publishers paid etc.

Entry #6 – I have been thinking more about the series and must be sure to include an in depth study of Wood's collaborations with Jack Kirby. To me, the collaboration of these two creative titans is a pop art landmark worthy of the world's finest museums. I'm imagining if Elvis had made a western with John Wayne and James Dean all playing opposite Marilyn Monroe... that's how strongly I feel the Kirby/Wood collaborations are the epitome of Americana. Unlike my Elvis/Wayne/Dean/Monroe fantasy though, the Kirby and Wood team-up really did happen!

Entry #7 – I think Steranko's work in the late sixties made a greater impact in a shorter time than anyone in the history of comics. He created a style that can be viewed as a highbred of Kirby's dynamics, Wood's polish and lighting, with Eisner's imaginative staging. These factors, in combination with Steranko's innovative storytelling and design, yielded a knockout punch no imitator has ever been able to duplicate.

Steranko is also a writer and well known comics historian who actually knew both Kirby and Wood personally. All of this makes Steranko the perfect candidate to analyze the collaborative work of Kirby and Wood.

Despite working with "famous" talents before, I still get anxious about asking someone I greatly respect to work on one of my projects. I was relieved when Jim so graciously consented to write an article on the Kirby/Wood work.

Entry #8 – I like the title *The Complete Wallace Wood Collection*. I intend for my project to feature art, stories, checklists, and interviews... all in chronological order following Wood's career exactly.

Entry #9 – I want a real superstar interview for each issue of the mini-series. The first, focusing on Wood's pre-EC work, would obviously need info from Joe Orlando. Al Williamson also knew and worked with Wood in those days and would make for a stellar interview as well.

The second issue should focus on Wood's historic EC work. In addition to quotes from EC regulars, I want to interview Frank Frazetta. The Steranko article will be the superstar feature for the third issue.

Entry #10 – Williamson agreed to the interview! Al is a consummate artist who inspired Wood as much as Wood inspired him. I just made plans to drive up. I recall the first time I met Al back in the early Eighties. He took time out to see me despite an impending deadline. Knowing he was originally from Columbia, I brought him a copy of his King's *Flash Gordon* #1 which I'd found reprinted in Spanish. I'll never forget the huge stack of original art he brought out, most from his work at Warren. At that time he was working on Relic for *Epic* magazine. I remember commenting that since Roy Krenkel's passing, Al was now the reigning master of the Franklin Boothish fantasy cities which highlighted Relic.

I'll never forget Al's words ... "Oh no, Roy is the master."

I repeated my statement and Al replied, 'Oh . You know I've been thinking of Roy a lot while working on this story.'

Later when the story was published it ended with a dedication to Krenkel... illustrated as if it was carved in stone at the base of a beautiful statue.

Remembering that story and Al's willingness to participate in my Wood series gave me even more indication of his integri

When somebody like Wally says, "I like that," it means something.

—Al Williamson, *The Comics Journal #90*

ty: honesty, and loyalty to his long-time friends. What a guy!

Entry #11 – Few knew it, but Frank Frazetta and his wife Ellie attended the 1995 San Diego Comicon. They were incognito, totally unannounced, wearing someone else's name tags! I was lucky enough to have a few nice conversations with them. I remember telling Frank that old photos of him on his 1950's Harley Davidson reminded me of his famous barbarian painting Death Dealer! He liked that and told me that he had acquired the Harley from a pimp in Harlem!

After the convention I occasionally phoned the Frazettas. One of these calls brought news that Frank's health had taken a turn for the worse and that they were returning to Pennsylvania from Florida.

Entry #12 – I'm going to see the Frazettas. Frank and Ellie's return to Pennsylvania coincided with my trip to the area but due to the recent turn of events I thought it would help to bring along someone who had known the Frazettas longer than myself… in hopes of interviewing Frank for my Wood book. Jim Steranko once again came to my aid. As it turns out, the best day for all of us was Father's Day. It seemed quite apropos as Frazetta is in many ways an artistic father to many who paint fantastic subject matter.

Entry #13 – The Frazettas live in a Spanish ranch house that is beautiful. It rests on forty acres and includes a small lake… and a mountain! Their children and grandchildren live nearby.

Ellie greeted us at the door and led us through various rooms all adorned with Frazetta originals. Although many works by friends and admiring artists are displayed at their Florida home, the only works at the PA. estate other than Franks' are one by Frank Jr.… and a painting that was a gift by and from Wally Wood!

Frank was watching baseball in his studio/gameroom. He greeted Jim and I… as we quickly became enamored with the fantastic array of Frazetta originals around the room.

The conversation often turned to old visits by Steranko to the Frazetta's former Long Island home.

When we would be really taken with a piece, Frank would respond "Oh you like that one... how about this-" and he would select another from a huge group in the corner. One after another, Frank pulled out fantastic oil paintings for our private art show… made in fantasy art heaven.

Even Steranko (who has quite a trained eye and is familiar with oil and gouache paintings by masters going back hundreds of years) was notably awestruck and unusually complimentary.

Ellie noticed that Frank was greatly invigorated by talking with people who could discuss (intelligently) art, composition, design, color theory, etc.

Jim and I got to see many new Frazetta paintings… including pieces for Glen Danzig's Verotek publications, the new Vampirella painting, a "repainting" of the stolen Conan painting (that never went to press), pillowbook-like water colors, and the movie poster painting for "From Dusk Till Dawn."

I almost felt I should apologize for directing the conversation toward Wood. Frazetta told us about the time he couldn't make a deadline on his Johnny Comet/Ace McCoy newspaper strip… he asked Wally to fill in. Frank also told us about when he and Ellie went to visit Wood once in the Fifties. Frank was quite complimented when Wally asked Ellie, "How does it feel to be married to the best?"

Later, over a pasta dinner, we spoke of many other things spanning Frazetta's career and even contemplating the future. It was a simply sensational Father's Day!

"Wally was a great guy, a lot of laughs. My Buck Rogers cover (Famous Funnies #213) is typical of Wood… as a compliment."

—Frank Frazetta, *Vanguard's Complete Wallace Wood Collection*

The author with Frank Frazetta (right) during a discussion of the contributions of Wallace Wood.

PHOTO BY JIM STERANKO

Entry #14 – *The Complete Wood Collection* is off to a great start, Radian is also in the works and now I'm talking to the Wood Estate about a full color card set! It's a lot of work but I love it and I owe these experiences (and more to come) to Woody… and his friends… and the great works he gave us. The genius of Wallace Wood inspired a generation of fabulous artists… and will live on! ■

J. David Spurlock is a nationally known graphic designer and is one of the foremost Wally Wood historians.

Lower prices on mid-grade Silver Age create run-collector opportunity!

Most would agree that a rather large percentage of the excitement in collecting is the pursuit of the book. Some even say that it is most of the thrill. Well, collectors seem to have set themselves up for quite the thrill, because the books that are being pursued right now are the most scarce and rare... across the board. David McKay, Spotlight, Toby, Artful, and McNaught are only a few publishers that collectors are finding a challenge to locate.

Golden Age

Dealers and collectors seem to be more acclimated to the new GA climate of late. Few non pedigrees in VF- and below are bringing the multiples of Guide that they were over the past two years. Once again, the Guide finds itself being extremely applicable when buying and selling material from this era... and this is welcome news because buyers and sellers can feel confident in the market and the role of the "Big Book".

Sales: Wow #1 GD/VG $2,600; Great Comics #3 FN $475; Crack Comics #1 GD $450; Detective #12 GD $780; Golden Arrow #1 VF $425; Jumbo #7 VG- $550; Punch Comics #10 VF/NM $375; Science Comics #5 FN- $320; Daredevil #1 GD $800; Adventure Comics #38 FN $700; America's Greatest #1 FN $550; Marvel Mystery #47 FN+ $375.

Atomic Age 1946-56

Just browsing through Gerber reveals the many unheralded titles that are now being actively sought out by collectors. Print runs were in decline, smaller publishers were working on a shoestring budget, and an amazing number had great difficulty getting their books distributed beyond the Northeast. There are longtime collectors here on the West Coast that have NEVER seen certain titles in collections, nor do they remember them on the racks. Good luck hunting these down the "esoterics" from this era because these are the books now in highest demand.

Sales: Phantom Lady #21 FN $650; Fighting Yank #25 VF $275; Horrific #3 VF/NM $220; Leave It To Binky #1 VG $95; Forbidden Love #1 FN+ $295; Brides In Love #1 VF/NM $90; Mystical Tales #1 FN $170; Peter Panda #2 NM $195; Red Dragon #1 GD $125; SGT. Sgt. Preston Of The Yukon #1 VF $88; Teen Age Temptations #4 FN $65; Wow #69 VF/NM $140.

Silver Age (1956-69)

Once again collectors are having fun in the Silver Age. Instead of a preoccupation with key books, the present price climate has made it possible to complete runs of a title for the first time in years! There's a lot of reported action with Showcase, Spectre, Journey Into Mystery, Strange Tales, and Brave & Bold. DC is still being favored over Marvel at this point, but we've all come to learn that this only means that Marvel collectors are enjoying the respite before the spotlight eventually shifts again at some unknown point in the future. The recent financial problems at Marvel have shaken up investors a bit, but collectors don't seem phased at all.

Also certain DC war books are still blistering hot, including the unfindable Our Army At War #83! These 10¢ and early 12¢ artistic gems still have a long way to go!

Sales: Hulk #2 GD $350; Green Lantern #1 FN $1400; Conan #1 M $195; Daredevil #7 VF/NM $265; Action Comics #254 VF+ $170; Showcase #22 GD $380, #45 FN $110; Strange Tales #2 GD $100, #117 FN $240; Brave & Bold #34 VF/NM $1,900, #61 FN $55; Journey Into Mystery #33 VG/FN $65; VF $110; X-Men #4 FN+ $225.

Bronze Age (1970-79)

With such a large field to pick from, collectors are still deciding which areas are to be the focal point of their collecting. DC 100 Pagers, and Super DC Giants, along with Classic *Continued on page 67*

GREG PHARIS & DAVE GRISEZ
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You'll be reading this in 1997, so we hope you had a wonderful holiday season and especially hope that you were able to score a few comics! We're very excited about starting 1997 in this comics industry. We feel that the Jekyll/Hyde year of 1996 is well behind us. Lots of fun with comic books is expected for 1997... it's in the air!

There's been a lot of interest in 1970's DCs Neal Adams' Batman titles are receiving quite a bit of the attention, especially Batman #232, 234, 251 and Detective #400, 404. House of Mystery, House of Secrets, Unexpected, and Ghosts are also being sought out from this era as well.

Here, Silver Age Marvel after 1965 has come to almost a complete standstill.

Nearly all 10¢ cover price comics below fine condition literally fly out of here. More interest is being shown for actually obtaining a particular comic book than concern about the grade of that comic. We think that's grand. Any Golden Age books grading out in the range of Fair to Very Good are usually purchased within a matter of hours of receiving them. We recently purchased the following in that range of Fair-VG. Within 48 hours they were gone. All were priced at Guide or slightly below:

Batman #43, 44, 69, 73, Capt. Marvel #47, 50, 57, 81, Capt. Marvel Jr. #72, 84, 86, 92, 99, 100, Comic Cavalcade #20, Detective #165, 191, 203, 208, Marvel Family #48, 59, 63, 72, 73, Plastic Man #30, 31, 42, Superman #64, 81, World's Finest #42, Sensation #97, 101, 104.

We would like to *Continued on page 66*

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CBM SPECIAL REPORT

Marvel Bankruptcy?

After more than a month of threats, Ronald O. Perelman appears to have kept his word by forcing Marvel Entertainment Group Inc. (MRV) to file for bankruptcy and seek protection from its creditors.

In a meeting last month, Perelman's representatives reportedly warned Marvel shareholders that if they don't accept his reorganization plan for the company, Marvel would file for bankruptcy protection. Perelman owns about 81% of Marvel through his Andrews Group operating company.

This morning, Marvel filed a petition in U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware seeking protection from its creditors under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code.

Marvel's reorganization plan, which is central to the bankruptcy filing, apparently has changed little from the offer Perelman originally pitched to Marvel bondholders.

Under the current plan, Andrews Group would acquire newly issued shares representing 80.8% of Marvel's outstanding stock in exchange for $365 million in cash or common shares of Andrews Group's Toy Biz Inc. (TBZ) unit.

In a related move, Andrews Group agreed to buy all class A common shares of Toy Biz held by public stockholders for $22.50 a share. Andrews Group already agreed to buy 67% of Toy Biz's stock from founders Isaac Perlmutter and Avi Arad for $17 a share in cash and Andrews Group debt.

The Toy Biz deal is contingent on the reorganization plan being confirmed by the court. Toy Biz eventually would be merged into Marvel, according to the reorganization plan.

Last month, Perelman offered to acquire new shares representing about 80% of Marvel's outstanding stock for $350 million. In the original plan, public stockholders would see their current 20% stake diluted to about 4%, while the remaining 16% would be held by bondholders.

Those terms, which value the stock at about 85 cents a share, appear to be substantially similar to today's plan. The dilution figures in the current reorganization plan were not immediately available.

by Bob Brodsky

MARKET REPORTS

Continued from page 64

close by saying no matter what comics you like, whether they be new, old or middle age—enjoy them and spread the word. Comic books have been around for over 60 years and we all want them to be around for at least a 100 more years. So, read 'em, collect 'em, buy 'em, and talk about 'em, and let's have a grand and fun 1997. Take care.

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My experience in the market this Fall, at select regional shows and through national mail-order, has been that demand remains strong for the right material at the right price. This may appear obvious, but it seems to me that too many dealers in the comic trade get depressed and skittish simply because their box of mid-grade Marvels isn't selling at Guide. To me, there are many different markets within the broad market, and part of what makes this hobby/business fun and challenging is that we need to be discerning about where the hidden value now lies.

After the tremendous rise in prices for Silver and Golden material during the last five years, it is to be expected that collectors will increasingly differentiate and clarify exactly where their collecting dollar will yield the greatest value. Most everyone agrees that the pricing rules of five to ten years ago for different grades of books (especially Silver Age) should be reconsidered and nuanced in the Guide. The overall market is now generally reflecting this phenomenon regardless.

I applaud the fact that the market is asserting itself and is now ahead of the Guide. This dynamic applies not only for what may be called a "price correction" for low grade Silver, but also the opposite, i.e., a surplus of demand for certain titles, genres, publishing periods, and, significantly, price points.

Specifically, books in the $50-500 range, published from 1945-1955, are big sellers in most genres, at nearly any grade. For example, Lady Luck and National (Quality), Yellow Claw and Young Men (Timely), and the Avon sci-fi books are all gobbled up rapidly when priced at 1.25 to 1.5 Guide. Even Westerns are selling regularly if they have something specifically desirable about them—good title (e.g., Kid Colt), artist (e.g., Frazetta), key character (e.g., Ghost Rider), or nice condition (for Westerns this means FN or better) and are priced reasonably (around Guide).

As always, certain artists are targeted by collectors in otherwise lackluster titles, e.g., Frazetta in the Tim Holt series, and the regular favorites such as Schomburg and L.B. Cole.

In defense of Silver Age, I will say that even low to mid-grade copies of the most desirable titles (e.g., X-Men, FF, AS-M, B&B, Showcase, Flash, etc.) find a home if they are still essentially attractive copies, are graded strictly, and are priced at a moderate discount. And as always, certain books are "hot" and undervalued in the Guide, e.g., X-Men #1. Finally, books that are true NM never have trouble finding a buyer.

Specific sales this Fall include: Action #39 GD/VG $125; All-Star #38 FN $600; More Fun #39 VG/F $400; Mystery In Space #2 VG/FN $375, #4 FN+ $300, #8 FN- $185; Strange Adventures #12 VF/NM $600, Miss Fury #2 GD+ $150; Mystic Comics V1#6 VG+ $700; Red Raven #1 VG $2,000; Young Men #24 FN $800; Jungle #31 $70; Hit #12 VG+ $200; Lady Luck #86 VG $150, #87 FN/VF $250; National #11 FN $225; Police #4 FN $4,75, Manhunt #13 F $100, Thunda #1 FN $400, Flying Saucers (1950) #1 VG $150, Rocket to the Moon nn FN $250; Strange Worlds #4 VG/F $150; Airfighters V1#9 VG $135, V1#2 9 FN/VF $225, All New Comics #9 FN $225; Famous Funnies #209 VG/FN $150; Mystery Comics #3 VF $400; Shadow V1#8, #11 FN/VF $200, Boys Ranch #1 FN $175; Reno Browne #50 FN+ $95; Straight Arrow #3 FN+ $80; Tim Holt #17 NM $250; Showcase #13 FN+ $1,100.

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Salutations from down South and a big greeting to all our friends across the country. Let us go right to the data.

Platinum Age

Mouse, Chaplin, Detective Dan apps., McKay 'Outcault books are always somewhat in demand, but the rest are fairly archaic and uninteresting to most collectors; historically important, but too dry when tasted. Here, our data shows platinum books sell mainly to those

trying to create a breakthrough market for them.

Sales: Little Nemo 1906 FN $1,200; Toonerville Trolley VG $75.

Golden Age

Clearly here the reader/collector (low-mid grade sales) and the collector/speculator (high grade sales) are the dominant purchasers. Our store sales are moderate w/ classic covers/art and cheap reads selling. Our convention sales are eclectic at best w/boom or bust punching all through the Summer and Fall cons. The predominant message is "I know this is a rare high grade copy of the Jumbo Book of Really Dead Cons, but . (fill in the blank)."

Mail order is a different animal w/all grades and genres selling in a real hit or miss fashion.

Superhero titles have slowed while obscure and esoteric titles have sharply risen. Ducks are perking and could break out. Cole, Schomburg, and Quinlan are cold w/Lou Fine and Will Eisner coming up as current favorites

Sales: Action #100 NM $1,320; Catman #7 FR+ $97, Human Torch #1 GD $1,000; Miss Fury #2 VG/FN $302, Rangers #38 NM $176, Punch #12 VF $800; War Fury #2 VG+ $40; Young Men #24 FN- $1,000.

1950's Books

Sales are brisk on DCs, increasing on Atlas, and popping in horror. High grades and "beater readers" rule this roost DC Silver beginnings here have plateaued and there is a slight movement in Pep Comics. Good Girl art is moderate, however, and we've noticed that books w/suggestion of sexual violence, drugs and gory murder are top sellers Wertham is rolling.

Sales: Advs. Into Mystery #6 NM- $135; Baffling Mysteries #2 NM $100, Beyond #18 NM- $75; Horrific #3 VF $400; Horrific #8 VG/FN $50, Showcase #6 FN $750, World of Mystery #5 NM- $160.

Silver Age

High grade Marvels sell and low-mid grades sell at heavy discounts, but I see this is mainly true for past '66 books. Main characters DC sells well in all grades with off titles selling sluggishly. By way of comparison, other companies move at a rate roughly equal to discounted Guide % in all grades below VF/NM. All square bounds are being bought quickly and quietly. Watch for movement in these 'in reprint titles.

Sales: Flash #160 NM $89; JLA #39 NM $99, Lois Lane #104 NM $30; FF Sp. #5 NM $125, Patsy Walker Fashion Parade #1 NM- $62; Love Romances #98 FN- $53; Teenage Romance #86 VF/NM $210, Yellow Submarine NM $266

1970's Books

High grade 15¢ and 20¢ Marvel & DC is the heart of this market. Watch for incredible movement on all 25c DC Giants and 100 pagers We sell hi-grades for multiples of Guide w/no problem. DC Horror is coming out of the gate in a big way.

Sales DC 100 page Spectacular. #4 NM $50; #6 NM $45; DC Special #1-15 NM $250, Batman #222 NM $72; Sugar & Spike #98 NM $42; Silver Surfer GN NM $50; Swamp Thing #1 NM $35.

Memorabilia & Undergrounds

Undergrounds are selling great in all grades, especially Crumb work. These are still way cheap for first prints. Comic memorabilia is also becoming a breakout market

Sales 60's Batman membership kit (VF) $42; Fantastic Four Blacklight Puzzle complete in VG+ box $160; Silver Surfer Blacklight Puzzle (NM in sealed box) $225, '66 Marvel Stationery Kit $260. (These are auction results).

In closing, I want to say that I feel there is a need for a very thorough changing of Guide averages, especially for mid and lower grades. I believe that two thirds of the Guide is incorrect and leads collectors and dealers to assigning value where none may exist. I feel this is breaking the trust in comics as collectibles from the Silver Age to the present

I'd also like to make a plea to all dealers out there - mainly to remember that this is a hobby as well as a business! Until next time.

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The holiday season is upon us and sales are brisk! Back issues, model kits, toys and card sets have all sold for Christmas gifts New comic books do not sell as gifts and reflect the overall trend in the recent past.

Silver Age (1955-69)

An active area of late. High grade books are moving if priced within reason. There are many collectors who will pay a fair price if the book is VF-NM or better. The problem lies in the fact

SCHIFFMAN CONT.

Horror repeat titles are leading the way this winter... some of which are impossible to find in any grade. Collectors are also recognizing that fact that the majority of the Gold Key, Charlton "Cartoon" books found their way rather quickly into the bargain bins – reducing them to low grade copies. Find these books in condition is really tough!

Sales: Amazing Adventures #11 VF/NM $60; Batman #189 NM $90; Young Love #109 NM $28; Aquaman # 48 VF/NM $50; Astonishing Tales #1 VF/NM $38; Rima #1 NM $15; Human Torch #1 VF/NM $25; House Of Mystery #224 VF/NM $35; Unknown Soldier #219 NM $10; Red Wolf #1 NM $8; Western Team-up #1 NM $9; Kamandi #5 VF/NM $14; JLA. #74 VF/NM $18; Flash #229 NM $22.

Locating those hard-to-find issues can also set one up for a long dry spell. I've known collectors sitting on a fair piece of change waiting for that "just right" book to surface. By the time a collector factors in scarcity, grade, and price, the window of opportunity is often quite short for these high demand items. We've all spoken with collectors that were under the impression that they were the ONLY one trying to find a particular title or issue. The collector grapevine works well, and it usually turns out that there are plenty of others searching for the same material.

Discovering new information, the wait, the hunt, and the eventual find... that's the excitement of comic collecting! ■

Collectors should note that the opinions expressed in CBM Market Reports are solely those of the individual dealers and collectors who contribute them. Seasoned hobbyists are acutely aware that prices vary based on geographic location, time of year, and a number of other marketplace factors.

that most collections that come our way are not in that grade range. The lower grade books (with a few exceptions) will not sell here on a steady basis unless they are priced 20% to 40% below Overstreet. This means we have to pay a lower percentage of Guide for comics that fall into the GD-FN range. This upsets some sellers who do not feel they are receiving a high enough offer. I just ran into this with a guy who has three lower grade copies of Amazing Fantasy #15 he wants to sell. There is no way I can get Guide ($1,500 GD, $3,200 VG) for these copies, thus my offer was below what he expected. I feel this situation will not improve until the Price Guides reflect a more accurate pricing structure for lower grade books

Sales: Fantastic Four #26 FN $125; Spiderman #9 VF $500; Batman #155 VG $60, Flash #129 VF $175; Spiderman #122 NM $98, Green Lantern #1 VG $350.

Golden Age (1935-55)

Interest remains high in certain titles (Timely, DC War covers, Hitler covers, Lou Fine and LB Cole books) the problem is keeping these books in stock. Most of the Golden Age collections that we purchase may have a few of these books but beyond that you are stuck with many marginal sellers Thankfully my Golden Age collectors are not as demanding (VF-NM) as the Silver Age guys. Most are happy with a nice VG copy. This is fine with the popular books, however, it causes a glut of comics that include less popular subject matter (when is the last time you sold a run of True Comics?) These lesser books have to be priced accordingly if you expect decent movement.

Sales: Batman #6 GD $295; Human Torch #14 VG $150; More Fun #84 VG $250, All Star #31 VG $250; Wonder Woman #17 GD $75.

The realities of the market

We recently declined a large group of mid 1940s to mid 1950s funny animal, humor and the like because the owner wanted $4,000 for the collection. The Guide price on these books was in the $10,000 range however it would have taken forever to get back our investment, never mind make a profit.

I explained to the owner that my $4,000 would be much better spent on superhero related books that have a history of movement here. Another situation involved a kid who approached our table at a convention recently. He had a group of Golden Age books that he said he wanted to sell. There were no rare or key origin issues in this group, however he had each book priced at 50% to 100% above Overstreet to begin with. The conditions on most books were in the VG range. I explained to him that his high pricing leaves no room for a dealer to operate. Even a collector would have had trouble paying many of the prices the wanted.

My point is simple… any product that is overpriced (with the possible exception of certain key books) is not going anywhere. Comics have to be priced at a level that will prompt a sale! That wraps it up for us this month. Hope you had a great holiday season. When visiting Walt Disney World please stop by and say hello!

HORAK'S HUMOR

BY CARL HORAK

HERE'S COPPIECE AT A COMIC SHOP—
BLUEHAWK #1, EH? A REAL BEATER! YOU OUGHTA BE ASHAMED ASKING $3.00 FOR IT! BUT MY KID MIGHT LIKE IT. I'LL GIVE YOU A BUCK.
A FEW WEEKS LATER, AT A COMIC SHOW—
JUST LOOK AT THIS NEAR MINT COPY OF #1 BLUEHAWK! I SAW A POOR COPY AT SAN DIEGO FOR $45.00. BUT I'LL GIVE YOU A DEAL. STEAL IT FROM ME FOR $38!

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The following are sales results from our phone auction held December 9-13, 1996 Please note reported prices include premium.

Sales from the "Aurora Collection"

Adventures Into Terror #9 FN+ $114, #11 VF/NM $110; Adventures into the Unknown #3 FN/VF $278; All Top #14 VG/FN $253, #18 FN+/VF $348; Amazing Adventures #3 VF+ $381, #4 VF $184; Amazing Detective Cases #14 VF/VF+ $153; Astonishing #14 FN/VF $92, Atomic War #1 VF/NM $790, Attack on Planet Mars #nn FN/VF $419

Beware Terror Tales #1 FN/VF $213; #2 FN/VF $170; #5 NM $230; Big Town #13 VF- $118; #40 VF- $55; Blonde Phantom #22 FN/VF $194; Captain Fleet #1 FN+ $45; Caught #1 VF/VF+ $147, Chamber of Chills #7 VF $105; #11 VF/VF+ $115; Chilling Tales #13 (#1) VF $225; Crime on the Waterfront #4 NM $139; Crime Patrol #10 VF/NM $407; Crime Suspenstories #10 FN/VF $115; #11 VF/VF+ $153; #12 VF $144; #17 FN $84; Crusader From Mars #1 VF/VF+ $633; Crypt of Terror #19 VF+ $1,044.

Dagar, Desert Hawk #20 VF/VF+ $256; Dark Mysteries #1 VF/NM $835; #6 VF $154; #12 NM $159.

Eerie #2 FN/VF $259; #3 GD $58; #5 NM $835; #7 VF/NM $475; #8 VF/NM $345; #13 FN $104; Eerie Adventure #1 VF/NM $463; Exciting Comics #64 NM $383; #66 NM $347; Extra #2 FN+ $35.

Firehair Comics #1 VF+ $391; Forbidden Worlds #1 VF/VF+ $1,265; #7 VF/NM $185; #18 FN/VF $67; Fox & Crow #10 VG+ $29, Frankenstein #19 VF+ $208; Frontline Combat #2 VF- $153

Gangsters and Gun Molls #1 VG/FN $121; Ghost Comics #3 VF $205; #4 VF/VF+

$282, GI Combat #1 FN $268

Haunt of Fear #16 FN/FN+ $81; #19 FN $81; Haunted Thrills #1 VF+ $285; Hedy DeVine #26 VF- $40; House of Mystery #2 VF- $306; #3 NM- $506; #4 FN/VF $223; #5 FN+ $175; #12 FN $82; #19 VF+/NM $183; #20 FN $81; Human Torch #35 FN/VF $435; Jo-Jo #26 FN/VF $121; Journey Into Mystery #1 VG+ $1,012.

#2 VF/NM $601; Justice Comics #26 VF $31; Justice Traps the Guilty #7 VF $95; #8 VF- $95; #9 VF- $84; #34 VF/NM $29; #49 VF $17

Man O'Mars #1 VG $85, Marvel Tales #98 VF $253; Monster #1 VF $92, Moon Girl & The Prince #1 VF $696; Murder Incorporated #5 VF+ $139; Mystery in Space #3 FN $278; Mystery Tales #2 VF $292; #3 VF $232

Night of Mystery #1 VF- $204, Parole Breakers #2 VF $253; Planet Comics #22 VG/FN $159; #40 VF $334; #57 VF/NM $368, #59 FN+ $209, Red Mask #53 VF $38; Robot Men of the Lost Planet #1 FN- $190; Rulah Jungle Goddess #17 VF $460

Sensation Mystery #111 VF $269; Shock Suspenstories #5 VF- $177; Space Ace #5 VF/VF+ $306, Space Action #1 FN $278; #3 FN/VF $201, Space Adventures #1 FN+ $118; Space Busters #1 VF/VF+ $506, Space Detective #4 VF/VF+ $259, #3 FN/VF $242; Space Patrol #1 VF+ $569, Space Squadron #5 FN/VF $292; Space Worlds #6 FN+ $127; Spellbound #1 VF $383.

Strange Adventures #1 FN $177, #8 VF- $304; #9 FN $463; #10 FN/FN+ $153, #11 FN/VF $140; #13 NM $150; #16 VF/NM $345, #17 VF $320; #18 VF/NM $421; #20 FN $117, #22 VF/NM $306; #27 FN/VF $196; #29 VG/FN $70; Strange Suspense Stories #1 VF/VF+ $385; Strange Terrors #1 FN $139; #2 NM/MT $190, Strange Worlds #3 FN $350; #6 FN $172.50; #7 FN/FN+ $116, #8 FN $159; #9 FN/VF $146; #20 FN/VF $29; Sunny #12 VF+ $139; Tales of the Unexpected #1 FN/VF $1,670

The Thing #1 VG+/FN $105; The Unseen #7 VF $114; #12 VF- $153; #5(#1) VF/NM $417; Thrilling Comics #63 VG+ $85, #68 VF+ $285; #69 VF/NM $348, #70 NM $419; #71 NM $348; Thunda #2 VF+ $127; Tomb of Terror #1 FN $105; Two-Fisted Tales #24 FN/FN+ $46; #28 VF/VF+ $115; Uncanny Tales #6 VF+ $332; #7 VF/VF+ $278; #9 FN/FN+ $168; Unknown World #1 NM $604; Voodoo #1 FN $228, #2 NM $474; #15 FN $63; War Report #1 VF/VF- $101; Weird Mysteries #1 VF $489, Weird Science #7 FN $93; #8 FN/FN+ $101; Weird Terror #1 VF $253; World War III #1 VF $400, Zoot #7 VG/VG+ $209.

Other Books

Action Comics #15 FN $1,679, #29 FN- $702; #36 VG $254.15; #51 FN $115, #52 VG $284; #58 FN $316; #267 VG/FN $63, Adventure #247 appVG- $216; #256 appFN/VF $127, #260 appFN $75; #267 FN/FN+ $236; All Flash Quarterly #2 appFN/VF $362; All Winners #2 GD/VG $633; #8 VG+ $613.

Amazing Fantasy #15 appFN $1,236; Amazing Spider-Man #1 appFN $1,113, #2 appVF/NM $460, #3 appVF $288; #4 appVF $224, #5 appGD $63, #6 appVF/NM $190; #7 appVF $164; #8 appVF $247; #14 appFN/VF $168, #100 NM- $71.

Batman #2 GD/GD+ $863; #8 VG/FN $513; #11 VG $897; #20 GD/VG $470; #27 FN $288, Bugs Bunny Vacation Funnies #1 NM $144,

Captain America #11 appFN $446, #100 VF/NM $75; Captain Marvel Adventures #3 appGD/VG $161; #4 VG+ $209; Conan #1 NM $121, Daredevil #1 appVF $334; Detective #41 appGD/VG $242, #225 FN+ $1,680; Donald Duck (Bubble Pipe book) #nn GD/VG $348; Donald Duck Linen book #978 VF $1,149, another copy DDLB #978 VG $190

Fantastic Four #1 GD $683; Flash Comics #8 VG $417; Four Color #10 (Flash Gordon) VF/VF+ $598, #16 (Mickey Mouse) VG $1,035, #25 (Andy Panda #1) VF/NM $403; #51 (Bugs Bunny) NM $407; #79 (Mickey Mouse) FN $278 30 Green Lantern (GA) #2 appFN/VF $673; #3 appVF- $673; Incredible Hulk #5 appFN $115; Lois Lane #2 appVG $105.80;

MAD #1 GD/VG $439; Marvel Comics #1 FN+ $41,745, Mickey Mouse Magazine #v1#1 VG+ $2,296.55, NY Worlds Fair 1940 # GD $863. Our Army at War #82 appVG/FN $57.50, #83 appFN $123; Popeye #1 VF/NM $316; Real Fact #5 VG+ $193; Richie Rich #1 appVG $75; Showcase #1 appFN $465; #8 appFN $905; #9 FN/VF $405, Star Spangled Comics #69 VG+ $214; Strange Tales #110 appVF $189.75; Superman #8 GD/VG $173; #9 VF+ $581; #18 VG+ $472.65; #23 FN+ $633, #26 VG/FN $380; #68 VF $397, #100 VG- $173.

Tales of Suspense #39 appVF $822; The Thing (Bethlehem copy) #16 VF $230; Uncle Sam Quarterly #2 appFN $150; Uncle Scrooge #7 FN $46; Walt Disney's Comics & Stories #57 FN/VF $127; Wonder Woman #1 VG $1,206, #5 FN $327, #6 VG $168, #53 VF+ $213; World's Best Comics #1 appFN $1,991; World's Finest #2 appFN $314; #3 appFN $612; #4 appFN- $317; #5 appFN/VF $598; #6 appFN/VF $231, #54 appVF $51; #72 appVG $85; X-Men #1 appFN/VF $920; #2 appFN/VF $150. ■

We'd like you to write for us!

Contact the CBM Editorial Department

619•437•1996

MARKETPLACE MAIL

Continued from page 7

Creig Flessel?

As a fan and subscriber to CBM, I've noted with interest the caricature of Gary M. Carter on the "Letter from the Editor" page, by Creig Flessel. Creig of course did so many of the great early DC covers, from Detective Comics #2, to the first Ashcan cover for Action Comics #1, the first Sandman covers and well, the list goes on and on....

If CBM has never done an interview with Mr. Flessel, it is long overdue!! I know that as a collector of Creig's early comics, and the proud owner of one of Mr. Flessel's Golden Age cover re-creations, I'd appreciate more info on this Golden Age great!!!

Also, if anyone has knowledge on how to obtain other Golden Age cover re-creations commissioned from the original artists, I'd appreciate some info. Some artists that come to mind – Bernard Baily, Al Bryant, Paul Reinman, Lee Elias.

Thanks and best wishes on the continued success of CBM.

Dan Makara, Connecticut

Sold on Green Mask #1

I was looking through some old CBMs and came across issue #39, which contains a tribute to Lou Fine. I re-read the article entitled "LOU FINE an artist's artist" written by Jon Berk and noticed that the accompanying checklist of Lou Fine books does not include The Flame #1 or The Green Mask #1. Although The Flame #1 is technically a reprint issue, it is from the Summer of 1940 and features the origin of The Flame. The Flame (on this cover) bears a striking resemblance to the Flame on the cover of Wonderworld #7, yet Overstreet mentions nothing about the cover credits for The Flame #1. The Gerber Photo Journal also mentions nothing about this cover. So the question is: Did Lou Fine create this cover?

If you look at the covers in The Flame series, you will notice that the cover to Flame #1 is clearly different than any of the other covers. It is my belief that Lou Fine provided the cover for this first issue. What is also interesting is that The Green Mask #1 is a Summer, 1940 issue, which is similar to The Flame #1 in that it is also a reprint, origin issue featuring a collection of Lou Fine stories.

However, in this case, Overstreet credits the cover to Lou Fine. (Oddly enough, Gerber also credits the cover to Lou Fine.) This cover is also very different than the remaining covers in its series.

Jon Berk questions Lou Fine's involvement in the cover of The Green Mask #1 by stating that: "There is a two month hiatus of covers as Fine made the switch to Quality publications." Can we be positive that there was a two month hiatus? Even though Jon claims that Lou Fine's "work for Fox publications abruptly ends with books cover dated April 1940", can we be sure that Lou broke off all ties with Fox at this time as well? Is it not possible that Lou Fine helped Fox to launch these new titles before beginning his work at Quality? What did Lou Fine do during the [so called] "two month hiatus"?

I believe that if we can prove that either The Flame #1 or The Green Mask #1 was done by Lou Fine, we can make the assumption that the other cover was also done by him, given that both books were published during the same time period (likely the same month) and both contain reprints and an origin. (Overstreet and Gerber seem to both be sold on Green Mask #1.)

If you compare these two #1 issues, you will also notice the similarity of the predominant hero in the background, with the less prominent villains in the foreground. You would also have a tough time convincing me that the artist who did Mystery Men #3 was not the same artist who did The Green Mask #1. Take a long hard look at these covers!

So, who was this mystery artist who came along and imitated Lou Fine's style on these two "Summer 1940" #1 issues and then disappeared from Fox? I think the answer is... Lou Fine!

In closing, I want to thank you for providing very informative (and sometimes controversial) articles on great artists like Alex Schomburg, Lou Fine and other Golden Age greats. It's also nice to see that some issues of CBM focus on a particular artist, a character, or some other interesting theme. Keep up the great work.

Long live CBM!

Dan Mei, Ontario, Canada

Dick Dillin Request

To the staff and associates of the Comic Book Marketplace: I want to thank you for responding to my letter inquiring about an issue of your magazine being devoted to Russ Heath. The morning you called, my nephew was home from school and he told me a Gary Carter called. I didn't recognize the name at first. Later in the day, my mind went back to the phone call I received and I thought about who I might have contacted within the last few days. I thought about the letter I had sent to you, so I looked at the credits page of your magazine. I was very pleased that the editor of a magazine would personally call a letter writer to answer his question. Because of that act of courtesy and you producing an enjoyable magazine, I am changing from a sometimes reader to a regular reader.

Again, I have a request. One artist who I haven't seen anything printed about is Dick Dillin. I think it would be nice if an article was run on his career. I feel that he was the best artist ever to work on the Justice League of America because he was able to draw all the characters so well and every character was recognizable. His art went well with whomever was inking him.

On the topic of Russ Heath, I would like to know if you could either give me information or direct me to sources. Currently, the only interview I have on Russ Heath is from The Comics Journal #117. I would like to know if there have been any others. I have an issue of The Best of Brave and Bold which has a profile on him and I have a one page profile on him from one of Ron Goulart's books. There seems to be an interview with Archie Goodwin in which he talks about Russ Heath, but I don't know where it has appeared. Is there, besides your upcoming issue, any others? An interview was promised in the second issue of The Lone Ranger reprint series

Congratulations – to Brian Calkins from Tennessee for winning the CBM #42 drawing. Your deluxe slipcase edition of EC New Direction comics are on the way! Just our way of saying thanks for participating in CBM #42's "No Contest" Free Prize Drawing!

from Pure Imagination, but I haven't seen any other issues of that title besides issue #1.

I would also like to know if you can tell me of any public appearances that Russ Heath may be making in the near future. If you could, please let me know when and where he may next make an appearance.

Thank you again for being kind enough to respond to me and I'll be reading your magazine from now on. Thank you for the time.

Thelmon Baggett, California

Boo! Hiss! Cheap shot!

Wow! What an incredible cover to CBM #42! From the dynamic color scheme to the detailed folds in the uniforms and the look of determination on their faces, it was the perfect illustration to showcase the magic artistry of Joe Kubert! Although the interview was not especially enlightening for me, it was enjoyable nonetheless. Tying it in with Matthew Gore's excellent article on "Tarzan of the Comic Books" was also good. I've always considered Joe Kubert "The" definitive Tarzan artist. Although I love Foster's, Hogarth's, and Manning's versions, I've always felt Joe's Tarzan looked like a guy who grew up surviving in a savage and unforgiving jungle, yet had an innate nobility of spirit that was evident in every dynamic panel. Thanks Joe, for the very best Tarzan comics!

Boo! Hiss! Cheap shot! I'm referring to your "no contest" drawing! If you think I'm going to cut up your wonderful magazine - forget it! And don't try to convince me to purchase another copy either - I couldn't bear to tear it out of a dupe either!

One last item: Please, oh please would someone (maybe even Ernie Gerber) tell me what is the best type of tape to use on comic bags (mylar or otherwise)? I can't tell you how many I've torn by wanting to re-read my favorite books and not wanting to remove the tape!

Eric G. Blackmore, Tennessee

Meantime, here's a toast!

My friend, Shel Dorf, gave me your current address. I recently purchased a back issue of your Comic Book Marketplace (#15, July 1992) through a paper memorabilia listing because of the Creig Flessel material described in that issue. I previously had seen very little about this artist whom I recalled from "The Golden Age of Comics."

There is also a reference in the "letters" section of the same issue regarding data on "More Fun" comics from the *(Continued on page 74)*

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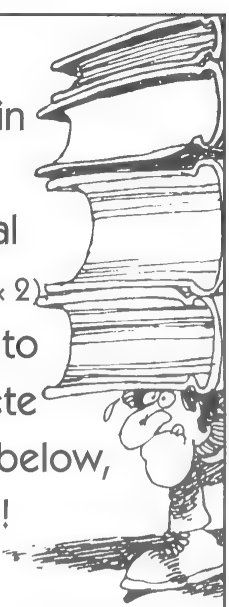

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previous issue (which I would certainly like to find) in CBM #14, June 1992?

My comic book interests are extremely narrow (roughly 1934 to 1941), yet intense regarding that period when I was growing up in San Francisco (not exactly a unique story): "New (and More) Fun," "New Comics," "Adventure Comics," "Detective Comics," "Action Comics," "New York World's Fair Comics," in addition to "Famous Funnies," "Popular Comics," "Tip Top," "King," "Super," etc., plus "Mickey Mouse Magazine," the "Feature Books," "Single Series," etc., and behind the scenes people involved in the creation and production. I also loved the daily and Sunday newspaper comics–going back to 1932.

Do you have a listing of the contents of back issues? If not, perhaps by some miracle you can recall specific issues dealing with my time frame. I am happy to pay premium prices if any are available, and I would like to subscribe but I'm not sure your current issues include featured material from my particular limited period.

In any case, I look forward to hearing from you and have enclosed a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Meantime, here's a toast to Fred Guardineer, Siegel and Shuster (or "Legar and Reuths"), Bob Kane and company, Sven Elven, Vincent Sullivan, Whitney Ellsworth, Sheldon Mayer, Harry Donenfeld, Leo O'Mealia, M.C. Gaines, Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson, and Creig Flessel–the catalyst for all of the above!

Rudy Behlmer, California

Strange Hobby

Did we get any mail today? I hear myself saying around the 15th of every month. What I'm really saying is, "Has my CBM come today?" I have been a loyal reader since issue #14 and would like to thank you for your hard work and dedication to what was described as a "strange" hobby when I was in my twenties. Tearing open that white envelope (as carefully as possible) each month, has become an unveiling of a time that I remember fondly. Seeing the cover to #42 has compelled me to write about it.

That single cover brought back a flood of

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memories of a time when reading a comic was a simple pleasure, not a major investment. Joe Kubert–what an amazing career. Your interview with one of my favorite artists, was both informative and inspiring. What a great talent.

As always, Pat Calhoun brings us comics with a twist, and what can I say about Michelle Nolan? I'm jealous - her knowledge about books from the fifties is phenomenal. Again, thanks for a great publication from a fan who never grew out of his hobby.

Philip Pyle, North Carolina

It was not poor sales

I enjoyed your feature on Tarzan comic books and hope that you will allow me to correct some of the errors therein.

The two Dell one-shots, Tarzan and the Devil Ogre (#134) and Tarzan and the Fires of Tohr (#161) were not scripted by Gaylord DuBois. These were written by Robert P. Thompson who, in the early 1930s, scripted the Tarzan radio show for Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. Thompson also scripted Dell Tarzan #1, Tarzan and the White Savages of Vari. DuBois did not begin scripting the Dell Tarzan comic until issue #2.

Russ Manning was discharged from military service in early 1952, rather than 1953, and shortly after that met Jesse Marsh. A little known fact is that Manning inked several of Marsh's Tarzan stories prior to beginning his own career as a cartoonist/illustrator. Russ Manning's first professional comic book assignment was to draw a proposed Tarzan 3-dimensional comic in 1952. The story was entitled "Tarzan and the Horns of the Kudo," and he was requested to draw it in the style of Jesse Marsh. However, the 3D comic market had already peaked by that time and Dell decided to shelve the idea. Dell later published Manning's 1952 Tarzan story as March of Comics Give-away #114 in 1954–two years after it had been drawn. However, tardiness of publication does not negate the fact that it was Russ Manning's very first comic book story.

It was not poor sales which prompted Edgar Rice Burroughs, Inc. to decline renewing their contract with Western/Gold Key and turn the franchise over to DC–and later Marvel. It was the fact that ERB, Inc. needed more pages of newly illustrated Tarzan and Korak stories for the foreign market than Western/Gold Key could agree to produce. DC guaranteed the production of the necessary quantity of stories–hence they received the contract, and the reason for their decision to sign with Marvel when DC opted not to continue the Burroughs character.

The 1938 Famous Feature Stories #1 (1938), containing "Tarzan of the Apes and the Hidden Treasure," was illustrated by Henry Vallely not juanita Bennett. The "splash panel" and additional panels in Dell's Black and White #5 (1939), featuring the Hal Foster newspaper strip adaptation of Tarzan of the Apes, were also the work of Henry Vallely rather than Juanita Bennett.

The Dark Horse pulp style issues and hardcover book, Tarzan: the Lost Adventure was not an unpublished Tarzan novella. It was based on an incomplete Tarzan novel begun by Burroughs in September 1946 and was comprised of 83 typewritten pages. While Dark Horse advertised the novel as being "by Edgar Rice Burroughs" there was actually nothing of Burroughs left in it, other than being based on his 83-page manuscript; having been entirely rewritten by Joe R. Lansdale rather than "fleshed out." Best Wishes,

Bob Barrett, Kansas

Thanks for writing in Bob, your research and information is nothing short of excellent! All of the data in your letter is new information for me, and I'll bet for most CBM readers as well. Let's hear from you more! My thanks also to everyone else who wrote in this time. I look forward to hearing comments and suggestions from CBM readers all over the world. You're all part of the "CBM family of readers" now, and your opinion really counts! I hope you'll write or FAX soon! Please note that CBM reserves the right to edit letters selected for publication for length and/or content. If you'd care to write, send communications to:

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TAKE THE CBM COMIC KNOWLEDGE CHALLENGE!

Comic-Quizz

by Rob Satonica

Q: During the Golden Age, the back covers of many of the comics published carried an ad-venture advertisement for Tootsie Rolls in the form of a comic strip called "Captain Tootsie." Who wrote and drew the strip?

A: *Rob Reed was the writer. C.C. Beck and Pete Costanza illustrated.*

Q: Danger Trail, a 1950's DC adventure/intrique comic, was to have a sister title that would begin publication between Danger Trail #5. and #6. When Danger Trail was cancelled with #5, plans for the new book were scrapped. The DC publications house ad ("the big yellow box" which all DC titles of that era featured) had already been typeset and so had to be rewrked before presstime to remove the new title. One (more?) book slipped through the cracks, however, and lists the companion title. What was the mysterios "new" title?

A: *The never-published title was Mystery Trail (see Adventures Of Alan Ladd #9).*

Q: Al Williamson is widely known for his science fiction comic work, especially his historic contributions to EC when he was a young man in his 20's. While at EC, he would do only 2 stories that were pure horror, as opposed to the SciFi or mixed horror/SciFi. What were those two stories?

A: *"Take Care" from Vault Of Horror #37 and "The Thing In The Glades" from Tales From The Crypt #31.*

Q: Frank Frazetta's fantasy work has made him famous and highly regarded as one of the masters of this genre. Many know that Frank started out in comics in the early 1950s working for companies like EC. He did not do a large body of work in comics before moving on to develop his fabulous painting skills, doing among other things, the covers to paperback novels. In between these two artistic periods of his life, he spent nine years ghosting someone else on a famous comic strip. What strip was it?

A: *Al Capp's Li'l Abner*

Q: This artist's work would appear in comics as well as strips. For comic books, he worked for Centaur, DC, Quality, and a long stretch on Lev Gleason's Daredevil comics. It was at Walt Disney that his career would flourish, at first as an animator, then later he would draw the Mickey Mouse strip. He was never allowed to sign this work, but his style and craftsmanship on the strip would become definitive for the Mouse. He would go on to do over 15,000 strips over 45 years.

A: *Floyd Gottfredson*

Q: Alex Raymond was one of the most influential artists ever to do comics. As the creator of Flash Gordon, Secret Agent X-9, Jungle Jim, and Rip Kirby. His first published work was a Sunday strip. What was it?

A: *Tim Tyler*

Q: When he first came to work for DC (then National), this writer was asked to come up with some characters until his regular assignments would begin. More Fun Comics #73 was the result, with the characters Aquaman, Green Arrow, and Johnny Quick all created by this man. He would also writer for the Superman TV show of the 50's along with stints as editor of Superman and Batman. Who was he?

A: *Mort Weisinger*

Q: What is the first publication in history to list both Stan Lee and Julius Schwartz in the masthead and/or indicia?

A: *Comic Book Marketplace (okay, so that was a little self-indulgent, but we're just so proud to have them, we couldn't resist!)*

Q: J'onn J'onzz, the Martian Manhunter, first appeared in 1955 in Detective Comics #225, where he would remain for over 100 issues. When Julie Schwartz took over the editorship of the book in 1964, Jack Schiff took the character with him over to House Of Mystery with issue #143 and would run to issue #174. During this entire 13 year run, one artist drew all of these stories. Who was he?

A: *Joe Certa*

Pseud-O-Nyms

Many artists have used pen names, or aliases, over the years. Each of these lists will contain from 10 to 20 of these pseudonyms, along with the real name of the artist. Your job: match 'em up! In some cases, there will be more pseudonyms than artists, which means that one or more artist has one or more pseudonyms. The first column contains the pen names, the second column has the artists real names.

1. Lousie Maxwell	a. Graham Ingles
2. Paul Dean	b. Alex Schomburg
3. Paul Carroll	c. John Byrne
4. Glenda Carrol	d. Will Eisner
5. Xela	e. Bill Ely
6. Heyn, Bjorn	f. Jerry Siegel
7. Ghastly	g. Joe Simon
8. Joe Carter	h. Vincent Sullivan
9. Will Georgi	i. Bernard Bailey
10. Jon Henry	j. Paul Gustavson

A: *1d. 2b. 3j. 4i. 5b. 6c. 7a. 8f. 9e. 10g*

Birthday Boy

Q: This great artist is best known for his war comics work at EC, as well as his work at such publishers as DC, Fawcet, Fiction House, and Western. He also ghosted George Wunder on Terry and the Pirates for 12 years. He was born February 5, 1920. Who is he?

A: *George Evans*

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This was the only evidence that any such item ever existed. Until now, collectors could only speculate as to whether such an item was actually produced; and its inevitable attrition rate over the past 50 years put its survival in question as well.

The standee is identical to the poster… or technically speaking, the poster is identical to the standee. The only graphics on the poster are those that are made by the standee. In other words, there is "dead space" in the area outside the oddly shaped standee design to fill in the margins of the poster. One can postulate that the poster design was secondary to that of the standee.

Pep "Superman" comic button, circa 1945-47. Note that the child (in the foreground of the standee and poster) is wearing his Superman Pep pinback on his beanie.

In any case, this beautiful piece was recently purchased from a dealer at the Glendale All-American Collectorama… an advertising and antique show. The dealer from whom it was purchased mentioned that he bought it from another dealer who had the standee in storage for 6-8 years. Nothing is known of the history of the piece prior to this time.

A standee of this type is a gorgeous display piece because of its 3-D appeal. One can only imagine this standing at the entrance to a local grocery. "Yes I'd like a box of Pep cereal, and how much do you want for that display piece at the door? I'd be more than happy to take that off your hands, thank you very much." ■

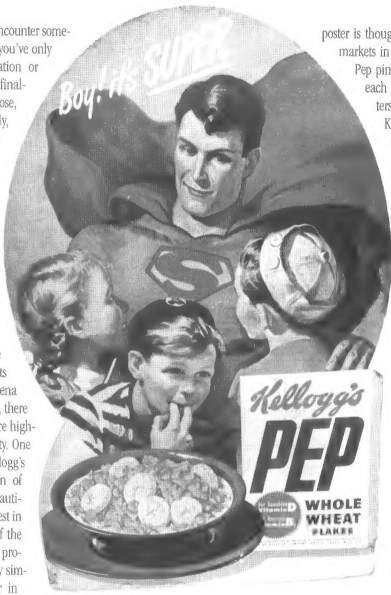
Mick's main interests are his wife Pam, his class of 3rd graders, the "Big-5" DC War titles, and superhero related collectibles and premiums.

The only known example of the poster (circa 1947) known to exist has the exact same image as the standee. Note that the poster shows a generic Kellogg's cereal box while the standee promotes Kellogg's Pep cereal. The Harry Matetsky authored book, Adventures of Superman Collecting, notes the coincidental likeness of the image on both the poster and the standee to a latter day Superman–Christopher Reeve! The 1947 promotional fold-out in which the standee was pictured was the only evidence suggesting that the standee might exist…

The Strange Saga of the Superman Standee!

It's always exciting to encounter something interesting that you've only heard of in conversation or seen in text. When you finally see that item up close, there are, inevitably, feelings of exhilaration, closure, and demystification; and though some questions have been answered, there are surely more to take their place. Now try to imagine an item which is so obscure that not a soul could claim seeing it… and so rare that none were thought to exist. Such an item has recently been unearthed.

Some background on the piece is necessary to convey its importance and rarity. In the arena of superhero-related collectibles, there are various items which are more highly sought after due to their rarity. One such item is the Superman Kellogg's poster which portrays the Man of Steel and three children in a beautiful full color painting. The interest in this piece lies in its portrayal of the Man of Steel in more classical proportions–neither in traditionally simplified comic iconography, nor in the more linear photographs taken of the actors who portrayed Superman over the years.



This is the only known specimen of the Kellogg's Pep Superman Standee. (COURTESY THE DAN GOODSELL & STEVE RODEN COLLECTION)

This picture better conveys the notion of Superman as omnipotent in stature and resolve yet earthy in behavior and intent. Indeed the poster image is so powerful, its economy of words–"Boy! it's Super!"–comes as no surprise. Few words need have been written to accomplish what the picture already does tenfold. As mentioned in Harry Matetsky's excellent book *The Adventures Of Superman Collecting*, the poster is thought to have been "circulated to supermarkets in 1947" to promote Pep cereal and the Pep pinbacks (buttons) which were found in each box of Pep. While most of the characters on the pinbacks were trademarked by King Features Syndicate, Superman was an anomaly for a reason other than his affiliation with DC Comics. Over a period of two years (from 1945 to 1947) there were five different consecutive sets made for inclusion in the Pep boxes. No character made a subsequent appearance in a later set once they had been included in one of the sets–none except for Superman! He was the only character in the full line of 86 comic characters to be included in all five of the different sets. As a result, the Superman Pep pin is more commonly encountered than any of the other Pep character's pinbacks. While Superman's selling success is clearly apparent with the poster, Pep cereal and the pinbacks successfully advertised on the Superman radio show. (Kellogg's was the sponsor.)

There is only one specimen of the poster currently known to exist, and many collectors have tirelessly scoured the country in an attempt to find it, as well as the standee. So, you can imagine my surprise when I received a call from some friends who claimed they had actually found the rare Superman standee–identical in imagery to the elusive Kellogg's poster–which no one had ever seen before. In *The Adventures of Superman Collecting* book, there is a foldout promotion piece which was devised to hook merchants into boosting Kellogg's sales. On this piece is a little picture of this same standee (not the poster) which was just discovered.

Contributed by Mick Rabin

(continued on page 79)

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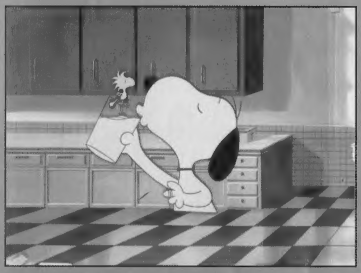

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